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# DORA GREENWELL

## A PROPHET FOR OUR OWN TIMES
## ON THE BATTLEGROUND
## OF OUR FAITH

BY

CONSTANCE L. MAYNARD

Moral Sciences Tripos, Cambridge
First Principal of Westfield College
University of London

LONDON: H. R. ALLENSON, LIMITED
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# PREFACE

THIS book is something more than a biography. It aims at being a discussion of one of the greatest subjects that can occupy the mind of man, namely, the permanent divergence in the point of view held by the two classes of men we will designate as the *Greek* and the *Saint*, with regard to their estimate of the value of our life on earth. Of this divergence, with its causes in the shaking of our accepted beliefs, and the ever-increasing allurements offered by the bright shows of the world, the life of Dora Greenwell is a luminous illustration. And, amid these reflections, so large a space is occupied, and worthily occupied, by her portrait, that I do not know how to find a better title for the book than her own name. Spiritual truths are more vividly learned historically than dogmatically.

As regards the facts of her outer life and the correctness of dates, I am indebted in the first place to the *Memoirs*, compiled by her friend, Mr William Dorling, and published in 1885. For the purpose of the present work this sketch was, naturally enough, inadequate. To see her life in the right perspective, and to appreciate her relation to the present generation, it was imperative to know her far more intimately. With this end in view, in the year 1906, I went about England endeavouring to gather up the personal recollections of those who had known her; even then this was a rapidly dwindling number, but the reminiscences were keen and bright, and were given not only willingly, but enthusiastically. Perhaps the one to whom we are most indebted for incidents vividly told is a Mrs M'Chesney, who had come from America as a young bride in 1864; but for letters, for a real mine of treasures as yet unknown, we have to



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thank the few surviving members of the Constable family, that delightful household which burst suddenly upon her dim and secluded life, filling it with bloom and fragrance. Most kindly have they given me recollections of great value, and have entrusted me with nearly a hundred letters, extending over a period of twenty-two years, and all as yet unpublished.

The great interest of the life now laid before us lies in the fact that in thought and feeling Dora Greenwell was some forty or fifty years in advance of her age. Problems she faced alone now lie open before every mind that is at once Christian and cultivated, and there is comfort to be found in her honest insight and brave example, as shown us both by word and deed. Therefore I have endeavoured in dealing with her works, whether prose or verse, to pierce below the surface and discover the spirit that animated, that often perplexed, but always noble soul. The list of her works that are now attainable is given in the Appendix, and the reader should possess himself of at least two or three, and so speak face to face with her who between heavy clouds beheld a most radiant vision.

The quaint little woodcuts are her own original choice, and are reproduced from the first edition of *Carmina Crucis*. Of herself one portrait is extant, taken when she was about twenty-three, but so conventional and feeble is it, so typical in pose and expression of what every young girl hoped she looked like in early Victorian days, that I have rejected it. We must trust to the stronger and more animated portrait, which I hope may be found in these pages.

C. L. MAYNARD

GERRARD'S CROSS, 1926

# CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION


PAGE

THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY . 9


## PART I

## THE LIFE OF DORA GREENWELL


CHAP.

1. THE YEARS OF OBSCURITY . . . . . 33
2. CHANGES IN FAMILY LIFE . . . . . 43
3. CONSIDERATION OF HER POETRY . . . . 55
4. THE CONSTABLES . . . . . 65
5. WORK AMONG THE POOR . . . . . 80
6. GOSSIP AND REMINISCENCES . . . . . 93
7. HER PROSE WORKS . . . . . 110
8. HER STYLE AND METHOD OF WRITING . . . 120
9. VARIOUS INCIDENTS . . . . . 128
10. ROME AND RITUALISM . . . . . 138
11. THE LAST YEARS . . . . . 151


## PART II

## THE MESSAGE OF DORA GREENWELL


12. THE GREEK . . . . . 175
13. THE SAINT . . . . . 188
14. TWO LOVES . . . . . 200
15. THE CROSS . . . . . 210
16. ANTAGONISM AND RECONCILIATION . . . . 225

LIST OF DORA GREENWELL'S WORKS . . . 243

# INTRODUCTION

## THE RELIGIOUS THOUGHT OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Dora Greenwell was of the order of the prophets. The actual years of her life were from 1821 to 1882, the sixty years that form the middle of last century, but, true to prophetic tradition, her heart and her thoughts ran in advance of her age. It is admitted by all, I think, that the spirit of the nineteenth century awoke late—certainly not before 1837—and then made up for its lack of years by the furious speed of its progress, and she too began her mental and spiritual life late, and only the twelve years from 1860 to 1872 are those that are of real import.

The narrative of the outer course of her life proves almost blankly uneventful. Year after year went by and "nothing happened." But if we break down the outer wall and look within, we find experiences so full and rich that we almost stand bewildered. Her faith in the world unseen made "the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose," and, as she possessed the art not only of thinking and feeling, but also of expressing herself with the attractive power of a style at once vivid and restrained, we too may share in her roses. Every portrait needs a background, every biography must present some sketch of the age in which the subject of it lived, but in her case this preliminary study is all-important, and must be treated at some length. Her fields of labour were those of religious faith and motive, and, if we would understand them, we must know where she coincided with and where she opposed the thought of her day.

This Introduction may therefore be omitted by the reader who is impatient with widespread tendencies and

with currents of thinking, and prefers "solid facts," but, when the facts are in his possession, he will perhaps be kind enough to turn back to these pages, for here indeed lies the secret of all the rest.

## I

Last century was a strange one for a prophet to face. In the outer world we have the changes wrought by steam and electricity, by the process of photography, by the revolutionising discovery that disease is due to the presence of bacteria, and a hundred other new thoughts and plans that have proved of great practical value. Equally great changes may be traced in the world within. The mind of man is altered, the questioning spirit is awaked, and religious belief changes its standing ground from the historical to the scientific, from reliance on the final authority of written words to the conviction of experience, whether collective or personal.

In the central years of the century we see the enunciation of the wide-embracing theories of evolution; we see keen solvents applied to our ancient and sacred writings, whether to their literary form or to their historical and ethical content, and, though only the perishable was destroyed, the process of disintegration was to the majority of minds exceedingly painful.

Dora Greenwell had to face these considerations in all the force of their first impact on the human mind, and with no suitable apologetic as yet written. She was a great and a daring reader, and while in one sense she easily assimilates the new ventures of thought, in another she cares curiously little about them. Her heart is far away in another region. She allows the negative to do as it will, while she is eagerly gathering up the positive. Verbal perplexities, the re-editing of ancient books, historical inaccuracies and scientific contradictions, to her were mere ripples on the surface of thought, interesting questions for those who had leisure to examine them,

but negligible compared with the life-and-death facts of the existence of our spiritual life, the objective basis of prayer, the central position of the Cross of Christ, and other fundamental truths connected with our creation and redemption.

Her mind was wholly bent on that which is vital and eternal, on that which can endure the stringent tests offered by the experience of life, and pass victoriously through the awful shadows of the grave. She is like a gold-seeker on arid plains, looking with an indifferent eye on acres and miles of gravel, baking in the hot sunshine, while, in following the faintly-traced course of some ancient dried-up stream, he picks up and stores his pins' heads of solid gold. And her gold is gold indeed, a lasting treasure for the twentieth century.

## II

Here stands before us the one who I think we may count as the one woman theologian of the last hundred years and perhaps for long before that, and though it was not possible that at the time her work should be rightly appreciated, sixty years of the turmoil of thought have cleared our vision and balanced our judgment, and we can begin to estimate her worth. She had difficulties innumerable, melancholy and persistent difficulties which pursued her life from beginning to end, but she was faithful to the treasure entrusted to her, and a certain range of themes—though not perhaps a very large one—are by her handled in so masterly a manner that she stands as representing an integral part of the noble thought of the world.

Her sympathy with human nature is boundless. The environment she would always choose was that of hope and adventure and springing life. She loved the flowery meadows where " the everlasting wonder-song of youth " is in the air, but she loved other places also. She knew the dusty high road of drudgery and the sliding mountain-slopes of peril; on the dreary flats of a poverty and

inertia of spirit that tends toward despair, on the bleak hill-top of old age, when mists begin to veil the earth below and there is no prospect but the unknown abyss of the sky, she is still beside us, and tells us we may be safe and comforted even there. And the ground for this insistence is always and only the Cross of Christ. On the title page of every one of her books is the same device of a hand holding a flat Latin cross with the motto beside it, " Et Teneo et Teneor," and this is a summary of her teaching. Hope and help are to be found here, pardon, encouragement, and a remedy for all ills ; here you may see life pressed hard by death, but it is life that wins the final victory.

When we deal with a rich and complex nature, we sometimes feel that it resembles a period of history rather than a single life, and in the biography before us we may see a kind of parallel to the conditions of the fourth century, with its strange triangular battle between the pastoral Church and monastic and pagan feeling. The organised Church represents protective care of the young and weak, and is kindly, indulgent, and full of hope. The spirit of the hermit cannot wait for the slow progress of the common horde, but, breaking every natural tie, springs forward to be alone with God in the silent desert or to live in communities under a strict rule. And as a background to both of these you have paganism brought into prominence by the short reign of Julian the Apostate. There is a sort of flying farewell glimpse of the old gods who, as Heine says, " once ruled the world in joyous nakedness," and there is also the best of pagan philosophy.

The parallel is curious, for the events of her life and the scope of her works will be found to be almost equally illustrative of these three incompatible aims. When her writings appear fragmentary, elusive, and even contradictory, it is because while pursuing one object she becomes conscious of the other two following close behind, each presenting a cogent appeal to our complex being.

It is not the half-hearted hesitation that is the besetting sin of the many, for her devotion to the Cross of Christ is unswerving, but that while she pursues the direct path she is alertly conscious of wide regions which claim her sympathy lying both to right and left.

## III

Let us endeavour to picture to ourselves the type of religious thought that coloured the central years of last century. Except in the case of a few writers, the books of the decade 1830 to 1840 seem to come to us from another world, in the length of their sermons and their earnestly self-satisfied dogmatism. By 1860 the air was somewhat clearing. Science was lifting its head and making assertions which must be dealt with in some fashion. The new theories of creation, as shown by geology and biology, were accepted by almost every department of scientific and rational thought as magnificently explanatory, and the minds of the seekers for truth could no more return on the old catastrophic views of how the world came into being, than those who had once read Copernicus could go back to the Ptolemaic doctrines of astronomy. Naturally the discoveries were not entirely correct, and, as the ideas of Copernicus needed the painstaking calculations of Kepler nearly a hundred years later, before theory and observation could be brought to coincide, so does science even to this day need helpers. Yet there is no retracing our steps.

Unfortunately by nearly all Christian ministers and theologians the new hypothesis of progressive creation was not calmly examined and weighed, but was dismissed with outcries of rejection, and it was only some twenty or thirty years later that we began to see the matter clearly. There are excuses to be made for this outburst of emphatic rejection, for, though born in the domains of biology, the doctrine of evolution laid its hand on history, on ethics, on almost every department

of human thought. It was a period of destruction, and there could not but be much suffering among those who both thought and believed. Among the ordinary lay people of England, a large number took shelter under authority, and by exaggerating the traditional forms of our ancient Church, tried to turn back the hands of the clock of time to pre-Reformation centuries. Others, wiser, retreated into the lofty tower of mysticism, where the arrows of the critic cannot fly high enough to enter, and the great majority contented themselves with mere rejection, and tried to live their lives exactly as before. In the lapse of years such are necessarily left behind in the expansion of thought, though they may stand in the foremost ranks of those who valiantly combat all the practical evils and miseries of the world.

## IV

Religion is a permanent thing, but theology is by its very nature in part transitory. The systematised side of religion, the side that can be stated in impersonal terms, we call theology, and this is necessarily influenced by the condition of our knowledge at the period when such a statement is made. It is absurd to underrate the value of theology when the fundamental facts of which it tells lie at the root of the simplest expression of personal faith, and yet the distinction between the two has in it a measure of truth. Religion is an individual experience, it is " Thou and I " between the soul and God, and thus, not only may the twenty-third psalm last for ever, but also the writings of John Bunyan and Brother Lawrence, and scores of our best-loved hymns, while the Athanasian Creed and the Westminster Confession, both exponents of sincere belief at the time of their compilation, appear to us to be obsolete. We look at the same supreme objects, but with the lapse of time the angle of our vision has altered.

This is not the case where devotional religion is con-

cerned ; here you deal with elements most of which are beyond the reach of change and decay, and so imperishable are many of our hymns, that you may have to look out in the index of your hymn-book if you would make sure whether the verses you are singing are written by St Bernard, or Tersteegen, or Walsham How, or Charles Wesley. We may therefore say that one of the very oldest of Christian hymns, the *Te Deum*, has done more to keep the central doctrines of our faith together than most of the laborious creeds we have from time to time compiled.

For several centuries theology stood still, checked and located by the strong hand of authority, and when it began to move, it did so at first very slowly, and then with ever-increasing momentum. If we consider last century only, we see that our doctrines were taken as fixed and final up to about 1850. The Tübingen school of critics had already been for some time at their destructive work in Germany, but, except among a few of the learned, England refused to listen to their voice, and it was nearly ten years later that she was called upon to deal with our own national contribution to the world of thought. This consisted in the discovery and formulation of the wide-spreading doctrine of evolution. *The Origin of Species* was published in 1859, and this at once kindled the blaze. Standard writers of apologetics such as *Butler* and *Paley* were discredited, and the hearts of the devout and the orthodox sank within them. The cables were cut, and so restless was the tossing on the sea of doubt, that to the sincere disciple of Christ no other course seemed to be open but to go on with faith and duty as though nothing whatever were happening in the world of speculative thought. Some few retain this position to this very day, but a position founded on ignorance is never safe.

## V

With the coming in of the twentieth century the "storm-centre" has changed. Throughout the nineteenth

century the conflict had raged round the letter of the Bible, every new discovery attacking either the veracity of the words or the ethical standard there presented to us; but though the whole framework might be set on fire round about, there was still left within a high tower an indestructible treasure, and that was the verification of truth by our personal experience. Against such experience argument breaks itself in vain. If Stephen calls out, "Behold I see!" it is of no use to reply, "No, you do not see," and the only answer left to the enemy is to stop your ears and run upon him with physical violence. In our days the resort to violence would be considered equal to a confession of a defeat in argument, and some other way must be found for an attack on this final stronghold of our faith. Accordingly in our day the storm-centre has moved; it has left history for psychology, and disputes the inspiration of the present rather than that of the past.

The difficulties presented by Balaam's ass and Jonah's whale are very slight indeed compared with entering upon a wholly new interpretation of the wonderful body of recorded experience which the Christian Church possesses, and to which she is always adding. The Good Shepherd stands in the midst of us invisible, but these experiences are the "footsteps of the flock," which for all but two thousand years may be seen pointing towards Him, scattered in the remote distance, but thickening in an ever-increasing multitude as we approach the divine Centre. These records we are now assured are founded on a misconception. Peace and joy, we are told, can be infused into the mind by hypnotic suggestion, and the whole range of the Christian experience with its contrition and faith, with the sense of pardon and of immediate divine guidance, can be accounted for by the strange, hidden forces of the sub-conscious mind.

This is far too long and complex a subject to enter upon here, and the apologetic that will explain the position aright has scarcely yet arisen, but I think we can already find the direction in which to look for an answer. Past

experience, often sharp and bitter, has taught us how unwise it is to shut our eyes to any criticism offered us by science, and to turn away in wholesale condemnation, and we see rather that we must draw a fine distinction between the method by which our Creator works, and the ultimate end He has in view. It is as though we were meeting with the doctrine of evolution over again on a higher and more spiritual plane; a lowly beginning, a "natural" process, but an end in view so noble that we cannot but recognise it as supernatural and divine.

It is of no use to be merely shocked, and to recoil from any re-wording of the Gospel. Many of these re-wordings may be useless, and some far worse than useless, but the truth-loving, philosophic cast of mind will never on the instant repudiate the trend of the *Zeitgeist* and run counter to it, but will examine diligently and see to what re-action from some over-confident assertion it is attributable. There are always grains of truth amid the cartloads of rubbish, and as Erasmus said wisely long ago, "By identifying the new learning with heresy, you make orthodoxy synonymous with ignorance."

We must face these great matters and arrive at some sort of conclusion, if only that of suspension of judgment, and this, if not for our own benefit for that of the next generation. There are few more distressing thoughts in the mind than to listen to some revered Christian teacher, to approve his testimony with the heart, and yet to feel all the while, "Ah, but then you don't know what I know."

## VI

Let us now turn to Dora Greenwell and observe how she deals with both these onslaughts, that on the letter of the Bible, and that on the Christian experience and its result in ethics.

To the conflict of her own day she is almost strangely indifferent. All round about her is "the battle of the

warrior, with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," and she stands by and has little or nothing to say. She watches the whirlwind of criticism as it moves its desolating centre round almost every point of our mental horizon, but she watches as one who sits as a spectator and is safe. Listen to the quiet tone she adopts in discussing the burning questions of her time[1]: "The critical is now having its day; we may compare its work with that clearing away which is the first sign of improvement, but its day must pass, as nothing of a simply negative kind can be lasting. Then comes a glad rebuilding of which I can but prophesy dimly, but I forsee that the power and work of Christ will be its centre."

More wonderful than this prevision is the manner from which on new and lofty ground she defends the faith of the simple and near-sighted, even while she gently puts aside the details to which they so obstinately cling. At every stage of man's development God must speak so as to be understood by him, even though along with the truth some misunderstanding is necessarily conveyed, and she would generously guard the childish type of faith that finds even such misunderstandings precious. Hear how, in a few telling sentences, in a letter to Prof. Knight of St Andrews University (5th April 1866), she deals with the difficult subject of the imperfect morality of the Old Testament, and yet puts the kindest (and surely the most correct) construction on the fixed opinions of those who will not listen to even the clearest demonstrations of reason. She writes[2]:—

"The very strength of the motives which Christianity brings to bear upon the human heart, the absolute claim it makes upon the whole of life, is the cause to which we may trace much of that weakness with which its adversaries have had reason to reproach it. There is no doubt a timidity and a rigidity in Christian thought as such. A Christian is too deeply pledged to a foregone

[1] *Two Friends.* [2] *Memoirs*, p. 104.

conclusion to be bold and fearless in tracking out ultimate truth. He shrinks—*he cannot but shrink*—from issues that are, or seem, at variance with all that is most dear and sacred to him. We know the way in which old-fashioned people hold themselves bound to admire the character of Jacob and to justify the deed of Jael, just because they are 'in the Bible,' though they would blame such acts and dispositions in real life. And this timid way of looking at things, however it is shown, is founded on a deep truth, *a sense of the organic unity of revelation.* Who would dare to meddle with one stone of such a mighty fabric? Colenso, I do not doubt, is a greater lover of truth, and probably of God also, than many of those who have opposed and reviled him, and yet one thinks he must have heard the shriek of the mandrake, the universal groan which goes through the whole when any fibre, even the slenderest, is wounded." These are beautiful and considerate words. Those who stand on the heights of thought are generally wont to pour down sarcasms on those who work in the plains, but here is a regal forbearance, the reading of a foolish act in the light of a pure motive, that is the mark of true greatness.

With regard to her own attitude toward the Bible, I believe I am right in saying that she never directly quotes a statement as finally authoritative and to be accepted without further question. Throughout her writings the Bible is the great witness, the supreme worth of which is proved by experience, but it is not to her the final authority. In that decade of "proofs," copious and irresistible, that time when a single quoted text came down like a sledge-hammer on an argument as an end of all strife, when dogmatic tracts were scattered by the thousand among the people, she stood quietly aloof. Never once does she complain of the methods of enlightening ignorance, never once does she adopt a superior tone; she herself gave away carefully selected tracts in the villages round about Durham,[1] and when the American

[1] *Essays*, p. 154.

evangelists paid their visit, she welcomed them with a kind of delighted surprise that the mysteries of the Gospel could be rendered in words that "the common people heard gladly," and composed hymns that were sung over and over again by the assembled multitudes.[1] And yet for all this, when she is alone, sitting with her elbows on her desk thinking, when she is allowed to be her own private uncriticised self, her mind turns in a different direction. She quotes texts, but they are illustrative rather than decisive; they are not as it were the printed page, but the diagram attached to it, not the central argument, but the strong corroborating evidence. Her views on Biblical criticism will never be known in detail, but we feel her to be a little unsympathetic with the tumult of her age. She read almost everything that was then published on the subject, whether in English or French, and a few books (far more laboriously) in German, and her words about all she reads are so calm and well-balanced that we cannot but be a little angry with her. Criticism offers blank contradictions to long-loved words, and throws cold water by the bucketful on the struggling fires of faith, and we feel impatient with one who stands aside in the time of such dire need, and seeming almost indifferent to the point at issue, has hardly a word of help to offer. Is she indeed a prophet?

## VII

Wait, I pray you, wait. Wait for the uprising of the thought peculiar to the twentieth century; wait for the new interpretation of the Christian experience, delay your verdict till the slight pillar in the distance, heralded gently enough by such works as those of Prof. James and others, draws near, and shows itself to be a devastating whirlwind, and then see her arise in her strength. Her spirit was biding its time, shut up in a row of slender volumes, quiescent, silent for thirty, forty, fifty years,

[1] "Songs of Salvation," in *Selected Poems*.

waiting till she could help effectively the Church of Christ she so dearly loved. The slow years pass, and she leaves the conflict to other hands, but at last when the enemy attacks us from a new quarter, we find her awake and standing beside us. There is no doubt of her sympathy now. She confesses the attack is terrible, and adds, "I myself all but died of it." Then her voice rises into hope and cheer: "But the good news I bring you is this, *We are not alone.* The two great and sure witnesses, history and experience, have but one voice as they tell us that God Himself, the mighty God in the human form of Christ, has traversed the very core of this black spot of sorrow and disenchantment, this centre of despair. Forsaken, betrayed, and despised, He hung on the Cross, exposed as a dead failure. Plenty of ethics in His life, plenty of personal kindliness, but nothing to help you and me and the world at large. Buried amid useless tears, the human race is once more disappointed, and must struggle along as best it may. 'We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed,' but evidently it was not. Is this the final truth? After the lapse of nearly two thousand years, do not you and I know better than the two bewildered disciples on the road to Emmaus? He speaks from heaven, saying, 'I was dead and behold I am alive for evermore,' and experience proves this mighty saying true. Sin, misery, cruelty, the failure of good and the triumph of evil, may throng our path almost to the extinction of rational argument, but there is infinite hope and infinite help in the one permanent fact of 'Emmanuel, God with us'—God one of ourselves, going through the worst conceivable, and yet coming out alive for evermore, alive and working with and through us. That is all we need."

These words are mine. They are too crude, too direct to be hers, but such is the import of her message to the Church of Christ, as we find it scattered in fragments over her books, whether they are prose or verse. Never does she allow her main subject to become so tense, so over-

whelming, that in one moment the mind must decide either to accept or to reject the statement, but she deals with others as she would wish to be dealt with herself, and with curious alertness turns aside to other themes. To her truth is all one, but a more plodding and restricted type of mind may well feel a little annoyance at her unfinished suggestions, and refuse to follow her down the side-paths she offers. She catches up rays from dear mother Nature, from bright human affections and simple household duties, from classical lore and German fairy-tales, from legends of the mediæval cloister, or myths from the cloudy past of Scandinavia, not as oppressing us with a sense of her learning, but touching on them lightly as part of our common inheritance, and always in the end she weaves her varied treasures into a crown for the head of the suffering Redeemer. She insists that He is the *Light of the World*, as well as the Light of the Church, and, while never vainly slurring over the distinction between the two, it is the wider range she loves to dwell on. She is like Barnabas, "a son of consolation," one who is aware of the worst, and yet is confident of the best.

## VIII

The stupendous problem of evil was ever in the background of her mind, and before its magnitude other perplexities sank into insignificance. Is God indeed doing the best He is able to do for this miserably unsatisfactory world? Is not either His power, His wisdom, or His love at fault, that the results are those which we see around us? It is little or no use trying to peer over into "the thick darkness where God is," for the eye of the human soul is not fitted to see in such a region, and perhaps she was unwise to dwell, as she occasionally does, on the negative aspect of things. Yet invariably this consciousness enhances the relief, the gratitude, the transport of consolation with which she greets the Cross. Amid the measured beauties of her style, we seem to hear

gasps of relief as of one barely saved from drowning, and it is this complete honesty of soul, this candour, that gives her a place among " the goodly fellowship."

The derived problem, the evil in the individual human heart, she deals with again and again, and her view was not that of her day. Knowledge of psychology has widened and become more accurate in the last fifty years, and the wonder is that with no one to show her the basic facts, and almost no nomenclature as yet agreed upon with which to handle those facts, she arrived so unhesitatingly at what appears to us now to be the right conclusions. In her day divines were wont to thunder against original sin as though it were something worse and more to be ashamed of than acts of wilful and deliberate sin, because more deep-seated and more impossible to eradicate by the efforts of the will. We see differently now, and the change has been wrought by the acceptance of the doctrine of evolution.

Frankly enough we can admit that " the old Adam," the merely self-regarding animal nature, is there within us, because (for one thing) we see its action in our babes, where the racial instincts predominate over the individual, and we know by experience that such instincts, if unchecked by some higher force, invariably develop into positive evil. Plainly enough we see that this nature by itself is not capable of inheriting the kingdom of heaven, but at the same time it is foolish to load it with abuse, for it is pronounced by its Creator to be " good," as being the basis, the raw material, on which the Spirit of God can work. Why then scold and fulminate ? Now that we know something of our ancestry, and can sound the depths of the instinct of " self-preservation," from which we have been led upward by the patient hand of our divine Maker and Controller, we are at last convinced that we are not accountable for this inheritance and therefore not blameworthy. We must accept the instincts and qualities of our nature as in themselves ethically neutral, and only sinful when they stand confronted with

the enlightened "free-will," which in adult life they insistently oppose and tend to drag backward into the unworthy regions where the gratification of desire is the chief motive power. The result is, as Plato says, "Knowing the better and choosing the worse," and this is perhaps the wisest of all the definitions of sin.

Now, without consciously opposing the spirit of her times, Dora Greenwell knew these things by instinct. She saw much in human nature that was sweet and admirable, and that she loved heartily; she saw much that was poor and weak and misleading, and on that she bestowed boundless compassion, and, though she saw definite sins too, she has, except for herself, almost no condemnation. She has glowing sympathy for the climber who would scale the snow-mountain, and yet she stands in unutterable pity beside the poor soul who dwells on the sodden flat plain of failure, and even for apathy and despair she has no word of blame. Those who deliver others with any signal deliverance, must first in their own souls sound the depths of fear. "If the Lord be with us," said Gideon, "why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles?"[1] In poignant words of her own again and again she re-casts this fundamental distrust, and yet, like Gideon, she sets practical obedience above the perplexities of thought, and finds that it "comes out right." That, she says, is "walking by faith."

It is complained—and I thoroughly agree—that her method of presentation of these mysteries is vague, unfinished, and elusive, but can prophetic writing be anything else? The work of a law-giver appeals to the will only, and may be concise enough. The work of a poet appeals to the imagination and may be complete, whether in the events of an epic, or in the motives and affections recorded singly in a lyric. But that which is still in the making cannot be thus rounded off, but necessarily has a form such as we call "unfinished." The

[1] Judges vi. 13.

prophet does not select, but appeals to the whole of our nature at once. There must be a firm basis of reason or the voice is not worth listening to, but the obvious appeal is to the conscience and the heart, to love and hatred, to hope and fear, to present will-power and future aspiration. All prophets worthy of the name are brought up in the desert and fare hardly, and all deal with the black night of sin and disappointment, and yet they point out the first streaks of dawn, and tell us of the glorious noonday brightness of the God with whom we have to do. Such are the true seers, and to this noble order our writer undoubtedly belongs.

## IX

Explanation has no further task, for if you will read the following narrative, you will find illustration of the more salient points I have here touched on; but before leaving the general reflections, let me mention one of the lighter elements of her character, and that is her attitude toward Nature, which was one of mixed fear and love. Throughout her writings she does not seem able to leave Nature alone, and yet her love is partial and one-sided, and sometimes shows a kind of antagonism. She did not care for a lake because it was cold and passive, she disliked a water-fall because it was noisy and insistent, but the half-heard liquid undertones of a brook filled her with joy. She could not endure the wind, which Thoreau sets as the final test as to whether or no you are a true lover of Nature—and I believe she never once mentions the sea. She rejoiced in the spring simply because it showed her the unfriendly winter was passing away, she admired the summer, but all her heartfelt love was concentrated on the early autumn, the opulent and glowing season that "crowns the long hopes of the year." In public and in private, in prose or in verse, wherever Nature is mentioned with affection, it is always either September or October.

She does not repeat herself, for, like one deeply in love,

the variety and charm seem to her to be infinite. Not a detail escapes her notice; the red berries in the hedge-row, the ripe nuts slipping from the husk, the floating yellow light near the threshers' barn, the darkened burnished leaves that have wellnigh done their work, the silence of the autumn woods, as of dignified breathing repose after labour accomplished, these were the sights and sounds and scents which brought to her a golden presage of something that words were too poor and thin to describe. Let me take almost at random two short passages from her pen. The first is in a private letter, and is descriptive of a day's expedition to the home of her childhood, Greenwell Ford:[1] "It seems as if it never could be so lovely as it was yesterday, the woods so rich and sun-tinted, the meadows so warm and browsing, the gardens so still and enchanted, and aching with scarlet against the dark green, like a heart too full." The second quotation tells of the quiet death-bed of a Dominican friar for whom she had a sincere admiration:[2] "One of those lovely afternoons that are warm with the sunshine of the long golden day that has gone before; the gossamer floats lightly on the air, the leaf reddens, the apple loosens its hold upon the stalk—all is peace, unspeakable peace, but the end is not far off." Such are her first-hand delights, but, like the true psychologist that she was, she recognises that they are closely circumscribed. With a touch of amusing contempt she depicts her own mind as "dependent and even parasitic in tendency," and asserts that she nearly always requires an interpreter between herself and Nature.

A long letter to the college lad, Archie Constable, dated January 1868, and hitherto unpublished, gives a remarkable summary of her own sense of defect. She has evidently been reading *Walden*, and writes: "I think Thoreau's works most wonderfully beautiful. They are not books, they are revelations of a deep and holy intimacy

[1] 21st September, 1868. *Memoirs*, p. 87.
[2] *Lacordaire*, p. 205.

with Nature, which repeat to many of us our Lord's words to His disciple, 'Have I been so long time with you and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?' I, for instance, hardly ever get direct at Nature's heart. All my interests are social and spiritual, and I feel Nature's charm more as a background. Sometimes in a tender sunset radiance the glory of the terrestrial and the celestial is one, but even this I feel in a less degree than most people, I think. Nature has always had to me a silent, impassive, sphynx-like character, uncommunicative and unsympathetic, and I believe that if she and I were fairly left to each other, it would be a tête-à-tête of two very dull people!" . . . "I love descriptions such as those of Humboldt. The mind of the writer serves as an intermediary between me and Nature, and enables me to get at her. Never have I met with books quite so beautiful as these; his writings have one very rare poetic charm—remoteness—a slight elusive touch which brings a whole far-distant world before the mind. You feel that his own is haunted and refreshed by wild breadths and spaces behind him. One picture particularly struck me where he says, that although we *are* so civilised and so shut up there is still the comfort of knowing that the Esquimeaux is at this moment setting forth across the frozen lake by twilight. I forget the words, but it describes the sledge and the harnessed reindeer, and takes one clean away to that spectral world of polar seas and snows, and makes one shiver."

She gives further examples from Keats and other poets, showing how even a couple of words can bring a whole scene before her mind, "*the whole*, fused into one clear drop," which is better to her than the presentation of the actual scene itself. She closes this self-revealing letter with the following words:—"Thoreau fails, I think, where all the Pantheists break down, in sympathy with man. Even Wordsworth is cold; he lacks what the poet, the lover, and the friend demands, and that is the warm spring of individual interest. All philanthropists,

however, have not this; yet how largely it enters into Christianity, 'the care of which,' as good old Bishop Wharton says, 'is for particulars.'"

## X

Once again the narrative that follows will explain these things. In some respects she was dependent on the minds of others, but in many other ways she was strikingly independent. She went her way in solitude, expecting no help from her surroundings. In this matter of the appreciation of Nature, she may mock as she will at her own deficiencies, but her sympathy with the spirit of the autumn is underived from any other mind, and the course of her own years pathetically justifies her love of this brilliant and brief season. Her life had but a barren and meagre start, and a late uncertain spring; for her there was little or no high blossoming time of jocund May, no opening out of floods of colour in the lilac, laburnum, and red hawthorn of high-spirited youth. Then came June, but it brought her no roses, for love—l'amour tout simple—never once seems to have touched her heart. Thus the days of the uneventful year went by week after week, but all the time from the windy March of life to its hot August was spent in preparing and ripening the shoots of plants that were to flower later. Just so stand the sturdy clumps of the sunflower, or the slender grey-green chrysanthemums, giving no response of colour to the fervid noon-tide, because their call has not yet come. Thus she waited. There was abounding life, but expression was not possible.

The gradual maturing of thought and the unremitting discipline of endurance went steadily on, and it was only when Midsummer was well past, and the days were obviously drawing in, that she begins to put forth the wonders of her wealth. Up to the time she is forty, there is a straitened feeling even about her letters, as though she aimed at something she just failed to hit, and then,

with little or no warning, they awake into a strange intensity of charm. Whether the subject is the discussion of dualism with Prof. Knight of St Andrews University, or a note of consolation to a sorrowing friend, or some schoolboy fun with Archie Constable, every region lies open to her with an instinctive grace no labour can imitate, and " all her life breaks into scent and bloom."

In early Victorian days the tyranny of convention over the lives of women of the more leisured classes was stringent and complete. There must be no straying from the accepted pattern, and the prophet of whom I write had her full share of the bondage. Hers was a square-walled garden, and even the ten best years of her life were closely shut in. Uneventful and restrained is the outer view, but to those who have the key a world of beauty is opened. Here are broad spaces of sunshine where the scarlet verbena leans outward on to the warm turf, and the borders are filled with purple asters, tawny marigolds, zinnias, with their grand tertiary tones of colour, and all the prodigal splendours that last for some three weeks of the year, and then the heavy dew changes one day into an early frost—in her case too early, out of all reason early !—and the flowers are touched by its solemn warning, and sink one by one into the silence of winter.

I wait, my soul doth wait
For Him who on His shoulder bears the key ;
I sit fast bound, and yet not desolate,
My mighty Lord is free.

He cometh !—o'er my woes
A victor, purple in His garments stain,
Red with the life-blood of His conquered foes
And mine,—Sin, Death, and Pain.

Be thou uplifted, Door
Of everlasting strength ! The Lord on high
Hath gone, and captive led for evermore
My long captivity ! [1]

[1] *Carmina Crucis.*

# PART I

# THE LIFE OF DORA GREENWELL

Thou hast given me a heart to desire,
Thou hast given me a soul to aspire,
A spirit to question and plead.
I think but of Love and of need.
Thou art rich, Thou art kind, Thou art free,—
What joy shall be failing to me
Whom Thou lovest ? Thy smile and Thy kiss
Can give me back all that I miss ;
In Thy presence is fulness of bliss.
I ask not its nature ! I know
It is life, it is youth, it is love,
It is all that is wanting below,
It is all that is waiting above.

*Carmina Crucis.*

## CHAPTER I

## THE YEARS OF OBSCURITY

LET us try to make a sketch of the years of obscurity. Dora Greenwell was born on the 6th of December 1821, at Greenwell Ford, a country house just outside the little market town of Lanchester in the county of Durham. George the Fourth was on the throne, and Tennyson, Carlisle, Browning, Gladstone, Hugh Miller, Lord Lawrence, Watts, Darwin, and a dozen other names that made the century famous, were all schoolboys. She had two brothers older and two younger than herself, and one of these, Alan, who stood just below her, was, during her childhood, her companion and delight.

Her father, William Thomas Greenwell, was a typical country squire, a magistrate, and for a while the Deputy Lieutenant of the County, and report says, "possessed of a comfortable fortune." There stands his full-length portrait in the old stone hall, ruddy, upright, and self-satisfied, and this last he had no need to be, for, no one knows how, but evidently more as the result of an indolent, easy-going nature than of bad habits, he lost the comfortable fortune, and the old house, Greenwell Ford, had to go to the hammer. That happened in 1848, and as the family had lived in that one spot for fully 300 years, it was, for the sake of continuity, worth an effort to avoid this catastrophe. Only a few years before, at some local celebration at the Blue Bell Inn in Lanchester, Mr Greenwell had been presented with this portrait, and had been spoken of as "the friend of the agriculturist, the promoter of industry in his tenantry, the good friend and neighbour, and the kind master," and the holiday

observed in his honour closed with a dance of the village people upon the green sward to the lively airs of a band. But the many virtues ascribed to him did not serve him to escape from ruin; there was gross mismanagement somewhere, and the rural peace, whether shown in ploughing or in dancing, was rudely broken up, and the place was sold.

Her mother was a very masterful character. She was a Miss Dorothy Smales, daughter of a Durham lawyer of some repute. Precise, shrewd, and vigorous, one would think she might have inquired into and helped to avoid the impending financial disaster; perhaps she tried to do so, but all we are sure of is that while feeling the change keenly, she bore it with lofty equanimity, and though living in a narrow town house, never for a moment forgot that she was "Mrs Greenwell of The Ford," and that the records showed that the family had lived there in unbroken succession since the days of Henry the Eighth.

An intimate friend of the family, Mrs M'Chesney, says, "There was no boasting, but a quiet dignified assumption that made her take the first place as a matter of right, and she treated those around her with a peculiar old-fashioned courtesy, prevalent in the days of Dr Johnson and Fanny Burney, but which was even then dying out. She was a genuine aristocrat of a type already vanished, and she expected deference and received it. Curiously enough not one of her children resembled her in this; they had a markedly democratic way of speaking, and I never knew one of them alter their manner by a hair's breadth on account of the social rank of the person they were addressing."

When her daughter was a little girl, she found a safe shelter for her shyness in sitting on a lowly stool beside the knee of this tyrannical parent, but as she grew up she felt more of the tyranny and less of the shelter. She never complained, though, as Mrs Greenwell grew into real old age, she drew the reins tighter and tighter, till friends looked on in dismay. The old lady stood like a

hedge round the almost exotic unworldliness of her daughter, and the thorns of that hedge were very sharp, and there they remained until the object of her protection was fifty. All the same, when the hedge was at last broken down by death, the poor exotic suffered in many sad and quite avoidable ways. More of this in its place, but let me relate one characteristic incident of the proud old lady.[1] "In the old days of Greenwell Ford, there was an ancient lumbering carriage called 'the Yellow Chariot' that had been in the family from time unknown, and which was now and then ordered out that she might drive in state to pay visits in the neighbourhood. Some five-and-twenty years after this carriage had passed from sight, and one might imagine from memory also, Mrs Greenwell lay dying. For many hours she had lain unconscious, and made no response when spoken to, when suddenly she opened her eyes, and, turning them full on her daughter, said in her clear imperious voice, 'Dora, my dear, I don't feel very well. Order the Yellow Chariot and I will drive home at once.' Those were almost her last connected words."

In the summer of 1906 I went a cycling tour to visit the various shrines of my prophet, and of course visited Greenwell Ford. It is charmingly placed, out of sight of Lanchester, and yet near that pretty little town, which, with its surroundings, stands like an island of bowery green among the desolate pit-villages which dot the bare country-side. Whether the collieries were as near a hundred years ago, I should doubt, but now they are almost everywhere. For a short space round the town all is sweet and rural, and some fine old trees guarded the house.

It was pleasant indeed to learn that, after nearly fifty years of severance, the old home had (in 1896) been bought back into the family, and that a grandson of the proud old lady's, Frank Greenwell, who goes by the name of "the Judge," is established there with wife and children.

[1] From Mrs M'Chesney, given verbally.

The intermediate owner was a Roman Catholic, and he had altered the house a good deal tomake room for a chapel, but his bow-windows and other additions were so slightly built, that they cracked and fell down, and the place was taken over in a most dilapidated condition and swarming with rats. Again it was altered, and when I saw it, my kind hostess assured me that hardly anything remained the same; new stairs, new wood-work, new grates, new tiles, new everything, except the kitchen, the cellars, and the old walls. Outside, the house was exactly the same, and, except for massiveness, which always lends dignity, I thought it an ungainly building, with the walls of yellow stone going up bare into the sky without a vestige of roof to be seen. It was quite square, save that on one side stood a porch with Doric columns of the same yellow stone, to which the carriage drive led up.

But if the house was deficient in memories, the garden was full of them, and I was allowed to wander at will. Some parts were new and were doubtless great improvements, but the squarely walled-in flower-garden was a delight indeed, for it was very, very old. It was sunk far below the level of the lawn, and a little side-ways flight of rough steps led you steeply down to the formal flower-beds below, crowded with snap-dragons, larkspur, orange-lilies, marigolds, and pinks, just as in the old days when this solitary girl ran down the narrow stairway and filled her basket again and again. Better still were the memories that crowded in, by going forward, for another wicket gate and a secluded woodland path led to the stream called the Brownie, which she has so closely intertwined with the earliest conscious life of her soul.

Anyone who knows Dora Greenwell's works can read for himself the detailed description of that brook which was to her a living thing, the one intimate companion of her early youth.[1] You cross by a cradle-bridge of insecure-looking antiquity, and then you command it all;

[1] *Two Friends*, chapter i.

the water, clear and brown as a cairngorm, coming from the heathery moorlands beyond, the banks some four feet high, the mysterious darkness where the alder bushes overarch the water, and the sunny network of ripples in the more open spaces, all is exactly as she left it.

Here she played with her four brothers, and when they were gone out into the world of school and college and of active life, here she still walked in solitude, up and down this overgrown, shady path, until she was twenty-seven, and the time of the *première jeunesse* had gone by. It is holy ground this path beside the Brownie, for here she was planting and watering the seeds of those noble spiritual experiences, those intimate relations with Heaven that give life and power to her words. Although there is little or no record, it must have been so, for a tree cannot bear leaves of healing and costly fruit until its roots have spread far and wide and found the nourishment they seek.

The fate of the little Brownie is a sad one. The next day I cycled along its course for a while and crossed its bridges, and went through a part of the desolate mining district, and came to a spot where a narrow swift stream, coloured bright orange with the mineral poison of some pit, drank up the cairngorm waters, thickened them to its own wretched tint, and hurried them on still further to pollute the quietly-flowing river Weir.

But while the Brownie was still self-respecting and pure and greatly to be loved, what of the girl who grew beside it? How came she to be there at all? How did her spiritual life begin, and what thought, or word, or upward dart of prayer helped its first awakenings? How could a soul whose attention was concentrated on "the interior life," spring from such an ancestry and find food and growth in such surroundings? She was like a burning-glass, giving a blank response to some stimuli, but in the very centre of life there shone a fiery circle of genius for religion. Holding to the Nicene Creed, orthodox to the core, yet expressing herself in language

so " modern " that sometimes it appeared like heresy ; free from the repetition of accepted formulæ, and making real first-hand " sketches from Nature " in all her statements ; I confess that it might be a comfort to find that this strange being, this gypsy among theologians, had some remarkable ancestor. I understand, however, that no such trace can be found, but the annals show a family composed of solid John Bull, with a probable tinge of the Dane in remote ages—but the Dane need not be counted, for he is incorporated as a part of John Bull.

" Never," exclaimed Mrs M'Chesney,[1] " never was there a case of a fairy changeling being introduced into a decent English family, if it was not that of Dora among the Greenwells ! She was of the Latin or Italian type, pallid, dark, with the short upper lip and the free gesticulation of a southern race. And such eyes ! not black either, but luminous, wonderful, not to be described. I never saw any such eyes but Mazzini's, and hers were like his, only not so handsome. They *do* say, you know, that about one third of the success of the freedom of Italy was due to Mazzini having such impelling, inspiring eyes, and hers had a strange penetrating quality too.

" The elder brothers were northern, healthy, florid people, and not an ancestor could be found who brought in a drop of southern blood. Her brother Alan was two years younger than Dora, and far handsomer, and though he had not her eyes, he was sufficiently like to form a sort of half-way house between her and the rest of her family. He had her smile and her charmingly democratic way of addressing you, as though you were sure to be very interesting, if only he knew you. He had her impetuosity too, but not having her depth of religious principle, his impulses tended to become eccentricities, and in the world of thought you never could be sure of finding him where you last left him. I always enjoyed being with Mr Alan, he was so out of the common, and they say that his nephew Frank has a touch of the same

[1] Given verbally.

charm, and is far more like his uncle than like his own father."

Her education, too, except what she gave herself, was of a formal and unsympathetic kind. Not worse than that of most girls of her day, for indeed my own schoolroom education, though later by the space of a whole generation, was scarcely better.

Leaving Lanchester I cycled to Durham, and her second brother, William, the old Canon Greenwell,[1] very kindly gave me an hour's conversation; he took a little time to warm to the work, but once started on the recollections of youth, he was most interesting. "We boys were all at school," he said, "and we had our games, and I remember a sort of vague pity for my sister that she was all alone and had no fun. I suppose it was a very poor education," he added reflectively, "for clever she certainly was, but nothing was made of her. There was a governess, a Scottish lady whom my mother trusted and approved, and she stayed five years or more. Perfunctory French, perfunctory history, perfunctory music—on she toiled, and did not care for one of them.

"There was something of perversity about her mind too, for the moment she was set free she got hard at work studying, and read a great deal. There was a Mr Denham, a very learned man, who lent her books, I remember. She became a very fair French scholar and translated some of De Maistre, and Lacordaire, and so on, and I know she read Italian easily and could enjoy Dante, and she sang too, and gave pleasure to her friends. But reading was her delight. Philosophy, biography, mediæval legends, political economy—nothing came amiss, and she read widely. But when she tried to express herself, everything had the same defect; all was so undisciplined, so unfinished! Yes, doubtless it was a very flimsy education for a sharp mind like hers, for there was no clearness, no certainty, and she suffered for want of these things all her life." The old man ended with a

[1] He died in 1917, at the age of ninety-eight.

sigh, saying, " I never really knew her, but Alan understood her, Alan was always her friend."

One point must be mentioned here, and that is her very poor health. She spent a great deal of energy in trying to hide it and to appear normal, but it was a persistent drag on all she tried to do. At the age of about twenty or twenty-one they took her abroad, and stayed in Italy for at least two consecutive winters and the intervening summer. She was too ill to do any sight-seeing, and they stayed on month after month in great anxiety. But even under these conditions Italy is Italy, and one might imagine this visit, with the peasants, the language, the climate, the fruit and flowers (even if nothing else) would have made a landmark in her closely-restrained life. But it was not so. When a friend expressed surprise that she did not long even once to cross the Channel, she admitted the bare fact of the sojourn in Italy, but would go into no details, never alluded to it again, and seemed to wish to forget it altogether. The same lady went on[1]: " She had miserable health, and yet in the course of twelve years of most intimate friendship, she only spoke to me about it twice. Both times she spoke very solemnly, saying that only those who had experienced the utter helplessness of a life reduced to its lowest point, to an exhaustion that was all but extinction, could tell what it meant. She could not allude to it lightly, and her aim was steadfast to keep the whole subject out of sight."

Without this constant pressure and thwarting, it is possible that a nature like hers might have become airy and speculative, and we ought not to grudge the weight of ballast that steadied her course, besides bestowing on her an almost abnormal fund of compassion for those whose lives were stunted, and who were not what they might otherwise have been. She was not so much interested in chronic invalids, as in all those whose circumstances were hindering; cramping poverty, the

[1] Mrs M'Chesney, given verbally.

treadmill of monotonous labour, the drying up of the founts of poetry and even of love by the insistent pressure of the animal wants; yes, even the shiftlessness of the pauper who does not care to take up the burden of clean respectable life, and is tempted to drink and so for one hour to flee away from sordid surroundings into a world where everything seems brighter, larger, and more hopeful; even these (which we cannot but call vices) won her sympathy rather than her condemnation, as though the conviction were ever in her mind as the words were now and then on her lips, "I should have been like that, and perhaps worse."

She attributed all this class of evils, not to the inherent wickedness of human nature, so much as to baffled aspiration and the forcing of the life into channels to which it was not suited, and, so long as there was not malice or designed cruelty, a poor creature might sink to the very lowest depths and yet feel certain of her compassion. She was always the "Prince Pitiful," and perhaps better health and happier circumstances might have robbed us of this beautiful side of her character. For those who love her, the recital of her sufferings is sad, but I suppose a prophet can never individually be a happy being, and gather round him the calmness and content that falls to the lot of the ordinary mortal. One great responsibility swallows up the lesser ones, and his portion must be the leathern girdle, and the diet of locusts, and life in the deserts, during the years of his youth. And this prophet could not claim exemption from these hardships.

### To the Brownie

Sweet stream, the haunt of solitary hern
And shy kingfisher, far from busy town
Or even populous hamlet, winding down
Through banks thick-fringed with underwood and fern
And hazel thickets, where the ripe nuts turn
Unmarked and slow, to Autumn's ruddy brown;
Where gems thy single rock its feathery crown,

For naught of thine looks ever sad or stern,
With scarlet berries of the mountain-ash ;
I never hear 'mid waking dreams thy dash
Above the pebbles, but I think on one
Whose course of days hath by thy waters run,
A course, like thine, of calm and quietness,
Nor ever raised a voice, except to bless.

*Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER II

## CHANGES IN FAMILY LIFE

On the 25th of February 1848, the Greenwell family left the Ford. The leaving was a slight thing to all but Mrs Greenwell. The sons were well out in the world by now, the father felt nothing but relief at having his fathomless embarrassments cleared up at last, and the daughter of the house had, I am convinced, long been chafing at her closely restricted, solitary life.

Books do not serve for ever in supplying us with the experiences needed to satisfy our mental hunger, and, somewhere between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three we get restless to sharpen our wits against those of others, and to exchange the delights of our imprisoned affections. As the years creep on towards thirty we are conscious of an overwhelming sense of waste; so much was given, so much more has been carefully stored, and so many different flights and freedoms seem to be possible to us, that the impulse towards giving and scattering and experiencing is almost consuming in its fruitless desire. It is the old story of "the need of a world of men for me."[1] The well-stocked cage may be safe enough, but, if there is an eagle inside, it would rather fly and run the risk of starvation by encountering the lofty perils of freedom.

To a friend made in after years Dora writes very calmly about the loss of her ancestral home. "Did you ever happen to hear that my poor father—partly as the result of a law-suit, and partly from having allowed himself to be imposed upon by designing people (you remember the peculiarly *easy* sort of man he was?)—

[1] R. Browning.

was obliged to part with the Ford, where his family had lived since Henry VIII's time, and to leave it in his old age and seek a new home?" And then she adds significantly: "Money troubles, you know, always bring in other troubles; or at least they do away with the pleasant *glossy* part of life!"[1] These are not the words of real grief, and her heart, so keenly sensitive to the woes of others, was above the affectation of counting as a sorrow that which in one hand might bring pain, but in the other had brought some decided good.

So they left the old Ford, and went to live for two years in Ovingham Rectory, Northumberland, where her brother William was holding the living for a friend, the same brother who was afterwards Canon of Durham. Health improved, prospects brightened, and this seems to have been a very contented two years. The chief feature in the parish was an old castle which, with well-preserved ruins and brilliant flower-gardens set among ancient woods, formed a very attractive object. The Rectory stood on the north bank of the Tyne, and Prudhoe Castle was opposite on the south bank, and there was no bridge, but you crossed by means of a perilous row of stepping-stones, or by a ferry-boat.

Nothing like so noble a thing as this ruin had been a part of Dora's life at Lanchester, and the best merely descriptive verses she ever wrote are called "A Castle Garden," and are inspired by this theme. There is a flavour about them of real mediæval romance, with its burning passions, its recklessness of human life-blood spilt, and throughout, like a spectre at the feast, "a hint of some dark tale" hidden within the mouldering walls. To a friend she writes after leaving: "Prudhoe always stands forth as a sort of concentration of summer, with its warmth and leafiness and sunshine within and without. I often wish I could see the broad evening lights streaming up and down the Orchard Hill, or walk in those hanging woods with the white sleepy-headed

[1] *Memoirs.*

moths clinging upon every bough, in the fulness of quietude and dreamy enjoyment."

So real was the absorption of beauty into her own mind, so completely did that castle become a part of herself, that she attributed to it a like influence over others, and (rather amusingly) goes on to ascribe to its presence the peculiar charm of character which she felt in her Ovingham friends ; she says they have " a sweet, severe, unworldly atmosphere about them, with a strong dash of romantic feeling," and this she sets down to their being in the constant presence of " the genius of the place." On herself at any rate the effect was real and ineffaceable.

But there was another friendship which did fully as much for her, though it is not acknowledged in the same way, and that was with one of England's saints and heroines, Mrs Butler, then Josephine Grey of Dilston, and wholly unknown. Seven years younger than Dora, she had been brought up in circumstances and under instruction far more favourable to the spiritual life, and doubtless was in many things the leader. There is always a difference in disposition between those who are the true outcome of a noble home, and those who have spiritually left their own people and their father's house, defied their surroundings, and inch by inch won the ground on which they stand. The initial difference was marked here, and lasted to the end.

All through life Dora was deprecatory, struggling against an unseen load, hastily snatching her golden glimpses amid untoward circumstances, keeping her lamp alight amid tossing seas of indifference, one who could always say with Jeremiah, " I sat alone because of Thy hand."

Josephine Butler was a prophet not of thought but of action, and though she too had her stringent portion of the leather and the locusts, and was indeed for many years like a voice crying unheeded in the wilderness, yet in her own soul she was completely at rest and satisfied,

and was able to set her own feelings and interests aside with unblemished selflessness, and to do her work "with both hands earnestly." If you study the first dozen pages of the *Two Friends*, you see the portrait of a greatly-bewildered soul depicted in following the course of the Brownie, one to whom education and wide reading only seemed to give fresh opportunities for self-torture and, while the outlet of action is denied, this condition becomes so oppressive that truly "that way madness lies."

It is a comfort to think that these two met and became friends, if even with rather a restrained and sober friendship. There is evidence that for ten years or more they were in direct communication on heavenly matters, and the first prose book, *The Patience of Hope*, is dedicated to "J. E. B." But the bond did not last all through life, as far as outward expression is concerned, and in old age and suffering Mrs Butler wrote to me that though the sympathy was at the time very real and living, "My memory of Dora Greenwell becomes dim." She adds, "*Carmina Crucis* is indeed fine. It has become part of my daily experience." Thus the two prophets met and parted, the heroine to act and the thinker to write.

Again circumstances gave the command to move on, and in 1850 the family of three took up their abode in the rectory of Golbourne, Lancashire, and stayed there four years. The church was new built, the village was a new parish carved out of a large and badly neglected district, and Mr Alan Greenwell was appointed the first rector. Here was a change indeed in the gradations of the great school of Heaven, and the "remove" was from the "Class of Meditation," which might possibly lead to morbid introspection, into the "Class of Hard Work." This meant taking something of a public position, it meant exercise of the judgment and prompt decision, it meant learning both forbearance and firmness by contact with the limited lives and obstinate prejudices of the industrial people, and all these new experiences were for good.

We can imagine the eagerness with which the brother and sister plunged together into this new work. There was no previous organisation at all, and everything lay open to their hands, the only hindrance being the almost savage independence of the people themselves. This overcome, and in time it was overcome, all went well, and they proved intelligent and sincere. There had been gentle attempts to do good among the agricultural labourers of Ovingham, but now there were deep-laid plans and systematic efforts. First we hear of a class of girls at the rectory on Sunday, and then a class of the corresponding lads and young men on a week-day evening, and these, rough in their every-day life, were proud of their interesting teacher, and always behaved well with her, if even with no one else. It is a good gift to have Mazzini's eyes, and sometimes a very useful one.

Other efforts followed as opportunity arose, and she writes to a friend: "I have gone about delivering such awful homilies on morals and *manners* (the last being rather at a low ebb in Lancashire) that I have quite got my name up in the parish, and lord it so over the boys in the school, who are a rough set, that I fear I am acquiring quite a taste for domineering and hectoring; and I advise you, my dear, whose deficiency in these useful arts so painfully impressed me, to come over here for a few lessons." [1]

In spite of the demands of stringent practical work, the idea of writing for the press became more vivid than before, and when Miss Grey of Dilston was staying with her she writes: "My dear Josephine continues to be a great comfort and help. We are very busy writing together, but we do not think of publishing at present." Nothing could be more wholesome than this combination of receiving and giving, of lofty thought and strenuous action, of sincere friendship and independent planning, but, alas, the enemy of all such good things, physical

[1] *Memoirs.*

ill-health, stood directly in the path and stopped her career.

It was at this time that her father died. We know little about him, except that he had a long and trying period of ever-increasing feebleness that needed unremitting attention, and for this reason torrents of gratitude are poured out upon "our Jane," a devoted maid who served him with a punctual and tender assiduity such as it seemed neither his wife or daughter were capable of offering. This long illness and death in the midst of the routine of hard work naturally left its mark, and first the health of the rector failed temporarily and forced him away to recruit his strength in Italy, and then the health of his sister failed far more permanently. She sank to a condition when the writing of a letter seemed to exhaust both mind and body, and when the spur she applied to her will before any effort in the parish was, though invariably successful at the moment, the means of bringing her even lower. A little extra stock of health had been laid in at Ovingham, but now she was living on capital not on interest, and it was no use holding the position any longer. So Alan Greenwell resigned the living in 1854, and his mother and sister went to live in Durham, and there they stayed for eighteen years.

It might seem, as far as the records are concerned, as though the laborious four years at Golbourne were forgotten both by the teacher and the taught, but it was not so. Eleven years later the place was revisited, and as by this time her garden had broken out into flower, and even her most ordinary notes are like daisies on a grass-plot wide awake and smiling, a letter on the subject is worth quoting almost in full. It is addressed to the foremost and dearest of her friends, Mr and Mrs Constable, and is dated from "Golbourne Dale—June 16th, 1865."

"Ever since I came here I have improved so much in health, and have had such a beatific visit in all respects,

that I have been longing to tell you so and to describe for you a little of the pleasantness that has come into my life, but now for fear any of us should die before I get my long, beautiful, ideal letter written, I had better write you any sort of a one that comes first to hand and heart. I was so *really* low and suffering when I came, that it is a wonder I have had such enjoyment, as if all the little pleasures were made on purpose for me, and the only things I could have done with at all. This is a real cottage with lattice windows and roses looking in at them, and all is green and still, and my friend very kind. Then we have Alan as a neighbour, for he had taken a piece of duty in a colliery district in this neighbourhood, what one may call mission-work, forming an off-set Church in the parish of an old friend, with whom he is now staying."

Then follows an ecstatic description of the said friend's wife, who is pronounced "angelic" in looks, ways, heart, courtesy, and exquisite singing. This paragraph ends with: "Oddly enough, she is personally very like our family on my father's side, but so much prettier than any of us can pretend to be (except possibly little Dora when grown to woman's estate), that to look at her gives me a delightful feeling of what we shall arrive at (myself in particular) in the millenium." "Then I cannot tell you what pleasure I have had among my old friends here gentle and simple—some very gentle, and some *very* simple—others rough yet kind, or too kind to seem rough. I did not think it possible they could have remembered after such a long separation, and the affection they have shown me has been balm and wine and oil and marrow and fatness. It is real affection, warm personal regard, of which as life wears on one gets comparatively little, while of mere kindness there is, happily, always plenty to be found.

"There is one girl whose countenance, naturally a very ordinary one, is actually transfigured by warm and beaming love. Her face makes me understand what

Swedenborg means when he says, 'The language of Heaven is nothing but audible affection,' and I could die easily if I was sure of such a look as hers on either side of the river, whether to speed or welcome me. Some of the girls are very pretty, and some quite 't'other way about,' but people who can look and love so can do without being pretty. The old people are quite as affectionate in their own way, which is to sit a long time silent looking at 'oo,' as if 'oo' was some rare and beautiful production of nature or art, and then to give a great sigh between pleasure and regret, and then to say some quaint kind thing, as sweet as the vowels it is composed of.

"Then, too, I have been involved in a series of tea-engagements, very delightful to the heart and to the immortal spirit, but which have been in some respects trying to what John Woolman calls 'the creaturely mind.' As cottage interiors I suspect are pretty much the same all the world over, and the picturesque apt to vanish when one comes too near, so sometimes my coops o' tay have been delicious, and sometimes attended with 'privations.' I wish I could tell you what delightful little galas we have had here for the young men and maidens of the village. Concerts and recitations, and some of them can act with inimitable humour and spirit comic scenes which they study and get up among themselves; it seems a talent peculiar to Lancashire. Then they are born musicians. Both the maid-servants here sing beautifully, first and second, so, while the village choir were in the parlour eating bread and honey, these two and I improvised a little native display of talent from the scullery, which we selected as the most favourable coign of vantage. Our repertoire, however, was limited, as on the spur of the moment we could find very little between the Evening Hymn, and 'She never blamed him, never,' and altogether I felt that our performance was marked by that want of style which so broadly separates the amateur from the professional. We were

clapped and encored, however, and most delightfully patronised by the performers of Mendelssohn and Bishop."

But we must leave these pleasant retrospects and return to the year 1854, and the settling down in the new home at Durham. For some five or six years after coming there, it seems as though she was as quiet as ever before, and had few public interests, but the real strivings of the inner life were more definite than they had been, and the buds began to swell. Her three " schools," the solitary Ford, the beautiful Ovingham, and the exhausting Golbourne, had each given her lessons of great value, but she needed leisure in which to assimilate them, and she was all but forty years old when she took up her position as a teacher and a guide. Let us review this quiet space of life before the blossoms of her garden break forth.

The mother and daughter lived together in an ancient, thick-walled house called 46 North Bailey, the long curving line of houses being thus designated from the Vallum or outer defence of the enclosure within which stand the Cathedral, the Bishop's Palace, and the Castle, along with their manifold terraces and gardens. The view from the house is peculiar. On the front side nothing but a narrow cobbled street where an occasional cart wakes the echoes with its pronounced rattling, and on the back, a short level lawn and then an abrupt descent, so that if you make a garden, you find it must be almost as much perpendicular as horizontal.

A few steps from the front door will bring into sight the magnificent pile of the Cathedral buildings, and then you have only to cross the central Green, and you look down on the town lying steeply below, and on the river and the bridge. The huddled red-tiled roofs seemed almost piled the one on the other as they mark out the long lines of Gilesgate, South Street, and Framwell Gate, and when the steep river banks are in the beauty of spring green, the view is one you might travel far to match.

In the six years of which we speak, 1854 to 1860, the whole district was in a transition state. Ecclesiastical legislation had, only some twenty years previously, reduced the enormous stipends both of the "prince-Bishops" and those of the dignitaries of the Cathedral, as one of the many results of the Reform Bill. And, coincidently with this decline on the one side, the vast wealth of coal hidden beneath the surface was in process of being discovered. Wealth was everywhere changing hands and that with great rapidity, and some of the pit-owners and their sons, shrewd, vigorous, keen-witted people, were every year rising in influence. Nowhere was the democratic spirit more resolutely at work than in the ancient city where learned leisure still lingered in the Cathedral precincts, if not elsewhere.

There they lived, and the chimney clock on the high tower that soared into the sky far above them, told off every hour and every half-hour of a rather dim and monotonous life. It is a curious thing that the mind on which the Castle of Prudhoe had made so strong and lasting an impression, should have nothing to say about that poem in stone, Durham Cathedral. But so it is. I have looked through several scores of her letters, and on one occasion when arranging the visit of a friend she writes, "I am glad that you will come in for one of our most solemn services," but otherwise all through, in writing or speaking, the great pile that literally fills the field of vision is as though it were not. She had friends among the canons, and staunch helpers among some of their families, but, devoted even as she was to music, the Cathedral itself, with its centuries of singing the praises of Christ, seems to have been unconnected with the life of her soul.

Her days went by as almost a reversion to the days of the Ford. Not quite, for there was a considerable circle of neighbours, and work among the poor became at one time almost too engrossing, but we see no children around the hearthstone, and we hear of no interesting

visitors. The thorn hedge grew sharper and more impenetrable with years, though, to do justice to our little household, we must add that the old lady preserved *toujours la politesse*, and had also a strong sense of social humour, both of which happy qualities prevented the petty bickerings and the frictions which tend to vulgarise many a home. There was at least a dignified calm, and the daughter submitted gracefully, if not willingly, to the restrictions imposed. But for her inner spirit it was a lonely life, and something in her full and rich nature was getting starved. Her health was at a sadly low level, for the physical atmosphere of Durham she found enervating, as though a thunderstorm were always coming on, and never came. But in spite of the oppression she worked her best in every available direction, and of these things we will speak later when her work became effective and popular. Thus she lived from the age of thirty-three to thirty-nine, and saw no future outlook, no prospect of anything wider or more joyous, but schooled herself just " to go on " to the end. People in those days were much older at forty than they are now, and we hear of her taking to " a silk dress," " a soft white shawl," and even " a lace cap with lappets," and settling in to consider not only the spring but even the midsummer of life as past.

Let us revert for a moment to beautiful Ovingham, and select half a dozen of her verses about Prudhoe Castle.

*From* A Castle Garden

" The scarlet lilies burn
Like fiery swords that turn
Each way at Eden's gate, and flame and fail,
As if in angel's hand
Each were a vengeful brand
That flashed into the air, blood-red, death-pale.

The shining marigold
Whose yellow disk hath told

The hours in light, shews here a tawny stain,
As on a dagger's hilt
A ruddy life-drop spilt,
Rusts through long years, a witness stern and plain.

The latest summer rose,
Red to its heart-leaf glows,
I know not if its hue be blood or wine ;
The passion-flowers frail,
Would hint at some dark tale,
As o'er the mouldering wall they trail and twine.

The voice of harp and song
Hath here been silent long,
Wild echoes of the revel wake not here ;
Yet knit within these stones
Are pangs, for which atones
No tardy vow, no lingering penance drear.

. . . . . .

Yet here beneath the moon
Yet here at burning noon,
I sing my constant song, a song of love ;
And all to win her grace
And all to see her face
Look on me for a moment from above."

*Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER III

## CONSIDERATION OF HER POETRY

DORA GREENWELL believed she could write poetry. She wrote a great deal of verse, and here and there it is of real beauty, but whether she was, or was not, a poet, depends on our estimate of the main characteristics of poetry.

It is, I think, generally accepted that there are three constituents required, and to these we may perhaps add a fourth, which will show where her deficiency was most obvious.

First, there must be some noble thought to express. Here she stands on very high ground. Her innermost soul is that of a true poet.

Secondly, the thought must be expressed with due surroundings of attractive beauty. Words strong and words tender, an atmosphere of reverence and distinction, and yet an incisive reality that at times is almost humour, must lie ready to hand. Here she is unequal, sometimes fortunate, and sometimes defective in expression.

Thirdly, the outer form must be correct or the verses will not live; the kernel must have a shell. Consideration of rhyme, rhythm, emphasis, alliteration, avoidance of awkward combinations of consonants, or the repetition of the same vowel sounds—after all, there is something about this section that is easily caught by an intelligent ear, and some people who have nothing to say can say it charmingly. Yet allegiance to the unwritten rules of our language is indispensable, and without this, our thoughts may be the delight of the philosopher or the saint, but they cannot be called poetry. Here she is

still more unequal. The obvious mistakes are not very many, but she has a habit of ending a line between two adjectives before a noun, and this gives a negligent and amateur air to the whole.

The fourth point, which should be added for her special benefit, is to know where to begin and where to leave off, and not be led astray in the middle. Here she is greatly at fault. Look at the exquisite symmetry of Tennyson, look at the fierce concentration of Browning, and, without looking so high as those twin peaks of Parnassus, glance at her contemporary, Christina Rossetti, and see the beauty of clean-cut form and of well-finished expression. Christina had not nearly as much to say as our prophet, and yet she is so strong of will, so happy in a kind of transparent solidity, that we know that many of her poems will pass from hand to hand uninjured, a heritage for our children's children. So it is with Jean Ingelow on a more popular vote, but so, alas, it is not with Dora Greenwell. There is no lack of ability, and there is indeed an overpressure of thought, one allusion suggesting another; it is perhaps due to a weakness of will in restraining power, for she labours under a burden of almost overwhelming sympathy, and in several cases breaks off before any definite aim is reached.

I would not overstate the defects, for if contrasted with the usual output of women's "poetry" between 1840 and 1870, her verses have clear merit. The halting followers of their really able leader, Mrs Hemans, trod in a circle of accepted ideas as narrow as their circle of rhymes. Those were the days of "love and dove," of "youth and truth," and contrasted with these, the poems we are considering are virile, full of profound feeling and entirely free from sentiment, not bearing the fleeting impress of a decade or even of a century, but with something in them beyond time. And yet her brightness fades again if we turn to Mrs Browning in her darkened room in Wimpole Street, reading the classics, and learning how to handle her tools, and labouring long and hard

before she stepped out before the world as a true poet. It is a far cry from Sappho to Mrs Browning, and yet there stand these two with the crown of the poet awarded them, and, though possessing the noblest equipment of spiritual insight, I fear we must admit that Dora Greenwell drops out of that wondrous order which passes in a narrow procession down the centuries.

Was she then not a poet? My own conviction is that she had the poetic temperament to the full, and yet for all that she could not write poetry, and this, not only arising from the want of early education but from an inherent lack of the power of concentration and of self-criticism. And she thought she could. That was the worst of it. The heavy burden of thought she bore was not exactly that of philosophy, still less was it that of reason, and still less again that of science, but it was so charged with compassion and sorrow, love and longing, and all the overpowering intuitions of sympathy not only with pain, but also with springing hope and joy, that it is no wonder at all that she attempted the form with which such feelings are generally associated.

I feel for her. If one has a dozen thoughts connected in spirit and yet disconnected in aspect, could one write a dozen little separate paragraphs to explain them? But verses are so flexible that a new atmosphere may be given to each thought merely by a change of metre and rhythm. Some may be solemn and some happy, and some indeed may partially contradict one another, and thus express, with a sympathy hardly to be paralleled in prose, both the bright energies of hope and the dull suggestions of misgiving and the many varieties of feeling to which our poor humanity is subject.

The position is rather pathetic. She knew in her inmost heart that she was a poet, and saw deeper below the surface than most people do, and, as she wrote many of her verses at a white heat with an abandonment that scorns the charge of inconsistency, she naturally believed she had written poetry.

About her beautiful prose works she seems over-modest, and seems scarcely to mention them save with a kind of reluctance and a little heart-wrung sigh that when finished they fall so far, so very far, short of her intention, but with regard to her verses she felt quite otherwise and enjoyed hearing them read aloud. She writes openly to her kind publisher, Mr Constable, under the date 9th January, only: "My delight in seeing the proof-sheets was immense. I do not feel vain, at least not at the present moment. It is too cold to feel anything so pretty and interesting, or anything but rather cross and blue; as soon as the warm weather comes the seeds of vanity will begin to sprout."

Nor was she alone in this estimate of her powers, for some of the best of those about her agreed with her. Her friend, Miss M. S. Talbot, writing just after her death, complains of the lack of continuity in her prose works, and laments that this deficiency may prevent them from taking the permanent place in religious literature which is their due (a very just and far-sighted criticism), but adds that she can safely predict a very different future for her poetry. "It has the promise of life in itself, for it bears this distinguishing mark of genius that it gives to some of the experiences which will last as long as humanity endures, a body of living beauty." "Exactly as she has written, no other poet has written, and we believe that as a poet she will receive a wider recognition than has as yet been hers."[1] The testimony of Mrs M'Chesney agrees with this verdict. She was, to use her own words, "the first pilgrim from America to bring her personal homage," and on coming over in 1865, stepped at once into the position of a dear friend. She writes to me, 14th December 1905, "You are right to name her a prophet, for she stood upon the mount and had moments of unveiled vision. Also she groped through the darkness and confessed the presence of the clouds. I know no songs so sincere in the avowal

[1] *Memoirs.*

of spiritual denial, and none so rapturous in affirmation, as *Carmina Crucis*. You will have divined from the tenor of my letter that Miss Greenwell is dearer to me as a poet than as a prophet; that my friend is more the singer than the saint." I cannot believe that the permanent estimate of her work will be given on these lines.

Let us enumerate her works in order. All her life is a little "late" in its chronology, and her first slender book of verses appeared in 1848, when she was already the age at which Keats died. It was during the short stay at Ovingham her spirits had risen with the sense of greater freedom, and she made the venture. Although there was a reprint in 1850, these verses have no distinctive merit, and then follows a silence extending over eleven years.

By 1861 her mind and heart had matured, her late summer had burst into its beauty, and we have a very much better volume. "The Soul's Parting" is an exquisitely tender little scene, and "Pax in Novissimo," though shrouded in a kind of subdued mist, has in it a touch of the infinitely consolatory. In 1867 she publishes again, and her verses are of a more secular cast, some of them even possessing a touch of humour. We have a dialogue between two Durham pitmen about the Lancashire cotton famine in 1863, we have stirring verses about the North and South war in America, and we have caustic and amusing lines about the *Saturday Review*, which appeared in the pages of *Punch*. At this date the review was popularly known as the *Saturday Reviler*, for it poured its acid solvent week after week on affection, philanthropy, love of Nature, and everything else that it could label "sentimental." Honestly I think that in the sixties the keynote of our good was a little sentimental, and that the tone of our rapture was conventional and needed a drastic check. In the realm of art the reaction toward truth is evident enough, as we see in the work of the Pre-Raphaelite School, and something of the same reform was needed in literature. It is

here that Dora Greenwell did some noble work. She had not an ounce of sentiment and conventionality in her whole composition, but she had fervent admiration, and she had courage; she was not shocked or grieved or silenced, but started to her feet in defence of childhood and simplicity and love, and roses and violets, and everything kind and sweet that lies helpless before sarcasm, and she struck out with a keen edge. In the somewhat random rhymes of this bright piece, I think we may detect the influence of *Ingoldsby Legends*, then newly published. "A Song which none but the Redeemed can sing," is the most beautiful thing in the book, and deserves to live and be a help to many.

For some years her more solemn poems were kept back, and then in 1869 we have the best of all, *Carmina Crucis*. Here is her wealth, her high flowering-time, not with the fragile wind-tossed blossoms of spring, but with the glowing brilliance of the garden in early September. It gives the impression that she has been right round the world, and has at last settled down to tell the Church of Christ—and the world too if it will listen—that she has tried every loophole of escape from the dread admission, but there really is no second method of dealing with the crushing burdens under which humanity labours but by the Cross. She seems to admit that she does not understand, and could not accept this way of release, were it not verifiable over and over again by the experience of the single soul.

It must be remembered that these were the days when the short but wonderful "Irish Revival" of 1859-60 was influencing for great practical good the slower and more heavy-going English and Scottish people, and she found close around her, in the pit villages she knew so well, many decisive proofs of the supreme position of the Cross of Christ. Where it was faithfully preached, souls were attracted to it; even some of those laden with the grossest sins fell before it, and the touch of the Crucified brought healing. Here was the regenerative point, and

there was nothing else like it the wide world over. The Cross stands alone in wonder-working glory, and the possibilities which lie open before every human heart are endless.

This victory was hardly won, for she never loses sight of the agony by which it was attained. How instinctively and how unswervingly we hate pain! Whether to feel it ourselves or to look on it in others is almost unbearable, and we shrink away, we put it out of sight. But here, in the Cross, we have to do with prolonged and concentrated pain, hovering on the threshold of death. To break the smallest part of our body subtracts attention from all the sound parts, and fixes it with iron determination on the sufferer, and here we see a whole "body broken for you." With the vivid dread of pain that seems to belong to the dower of the past, these thoughts are wellnigh intolerable, yet again and again she pierces through the mortal show to the spiritual centre, and says to the soul, "This is the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world. I choose here," and then, as it were, sits down to wait till the mystery is cleared. The sense of triumph given at the close of the book is short, very short, but it is clear as the clash of cymbals. Not one misgiving is lurking behind it, for every one has, to the utmost of her power, been unearthed and faced beforehand, and the pæan can be sung with full and exultant acclaim.

This faith took practical shape in a little paper-covered book called *Songs of Salvation*, published in 1873, when the American evangelists had begun their work in the district. There are only eight songs, and of these four are rhymed conversations of the pit folk on the subject of conversion to God, simple and touching. The remaining four found their way, a little shortened, into Sankey's hymn book, and thence into more permanent collections. The best of these begins with the words,

"I am not skilled to understand."

Also the last few verses of a longer poem called " Redemption " are very beautiful :

> " But since my Lord has looked on me, and since He has bid me look,
> Once in my heart, and once in my life, and once in His blessed Book."

From this starting-point these verses go on to state the Gospel of pardon and regeneration with great force and tenderness. One feels she is always taking her place beside the poorest and most needy, kneeling at the foot of the Cross and speaking out of the depths of her own experience as well as of theirs.

It is not all as simple as it sounds, for somehow, whether for good or for ill, it does not seem possible for the scholar, the psychologist, and the poet, to be for ever contented with this simple and obedient frame of mind. It relies too much on mere authority. It is true the authority is that of the Bible, and when this is backed up by personal experience we have " the two witnesses " demanded by the law to ensure certainty. But the querulous philosopher has so deep a sympathy with human nature as it stands, that he finds plenty of things to complain of. " If hundreds are converted, thousands more of the equally worthy—or equally unworthy—are not. Salvation seems local, arbitrary, dependent on the method of presentation. The gate has been made too strait, and I must look elsewhere as well. Does God not care for courage, for generosity, faithfulness, and sweet kindness ? The plan of the evangelists is like that of a child ' proving a sum ' on a slate. The individual sum comes out right, but I want to understand the principle of the process and state a solution in general terms."

I suppose that in a mind of wide reading and cultivation thoughts such as these are bound to arise unbidden and check the flow of satisfaction, and certainly to our prophet they came almost simultaneously, for in this very year, 1873, she brought out the strangest and most daring of all her writings, a slender little volume entitled

*The Soul's Legend.* This contains three tales, a sort of compromise between prose and verse, written as the Sagas might be written, unrhymed, but in short telling sentences, and they are decidedly impressive. They contain about the bitterest admixture of rebellion and acquiescence that a single human heart has been able to entertain and express since the days of Job. The arraignment of the Most High is like his, and some of her sentences penetrate the mind and will not be dislodged. Each tale ends with an abrupt sentence or two of reconciliation, and one feels the collective difficulty has been in no way explained, even though in the single case before it has been spiritually surmounted.

Finally, in 1876, she published *Camera Obscura*, a book not ill-named, but containing at least one striking contribution called, "The Man with the Three Friends": the man is condemned to die, and his three friends—the world, his wife and children, and Christ the Lord—prove their respective worth. Beside these definite books we have also fugitive verses written for magazines, and these are on lighter subjects, and some of them have real merit.

Such is the complete list of her poetic work, now to be had in two well-looking volumes.[1] The one is an exact reprint of her *Carmina Crucis*, quaint woodcuts and all, and the other gathers into one all that is really worth preserving under the title of *Selected Poems*, and a very interesting volume it is. Let me close this survey by copying out one of her fugitive pieces; it is not in the correct form of a sonnet, but for all that it is a fine thing.

TO THE MEMORY OF DAVID LIVINGSTONE

"Athanasius contra Mundun"

He stood within the wilderness, and cried;
From hearts innumerable went up a groan,
But voice was none, or any that replied.

[1] Published by H. R. Allenson, Ltd., 3s. 6d. each.

Not Europe, vowed to lofty prudence, tied
To dull convention, colder than a stone ;
Not Asia, fierce and fawning, sleek of hide,
Nor thou, brute Africa, a patient, strong,
Mute ass, between two burdens couchant long.

He stood within the widerness and cried ;
Then all at once, as when a mighty tide
Hurls a huge wave before it, heaved and rose
The world's high heart to battle with its foes,—
He stayed within the wilderness, and died.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE CONSTABLES

LET us now return to the daily life at Durham, and describe the greatest of the events that it held in store for this belated and hidden life. As she was pacing her path along the blank wall of her duty, in no way ill-content with it, as hope for a wider, stronger life seemed to be a thing of the past, suddenly (in the year 1860), there was an angle in the wall, and an unexpected door, which opened and let her look through into a region of vigour and beauty and affection unknown before. It was a gift straight from God. "Thou openest Thy hands and they are filled with good." That is always a true saying, and here we may see the divine Hand opened, and in a few months, or even weeks, her silently-starving heart was filled to the brim with good, genuine and permanent good.

The channel of this good was her intimacy with the family of the Constables; here she found the beneficence of guiding knowledge, here was ardent affection and admiration, here was youth, adventure, high spirits and fun, here was the charming companionship of well-ordered childhood, both in the schoolroom and the nursery, here was every interest and every delight that previously had been represented in her life by a chilly blank. She had doubtless never formulated what she lacked, and perhaps had hardly known what it was, and here, in one household, was presented to her everything that heart could wish. The late spring and the grudging unsatisfactory summer cleared up in August, and her close-walled garden started on an autumn of sunny splendour such as is a thing to dream of.

The outer facts are these. *The Patience of Hope*, her first prose book, was written, and she selected as publisher the firm of Thomas Constable of Edinburgh. He was the son of Sir Walter Scott's intimate friend, Archibald Constable, and was himself a prominent man in the literary world of Scotland. In the summer of 1859 a correspondence was begun on the subject of the new book, and a curious correspondence it was, for real intimacy was almost at once established. Every point is discussed with the utmost spirit and energy, and though the letters are undated, one can trace how the book is getting on. It is quite possible there is a confusion here, for some refer to the publication of *A Present Heaven*, a year or more later, but I think one can sever the two sets of letters by the affectionate messages that close those of the later series. First different types are tried, then come the proof sheets, the title-page, the dedication, the motto and the device of the hand holding the cross, which was designed for her by G. D. Leslie, R.A. Then comes the binding, and whether it shall be " a dark decided purple " or a brown cloth, and the " red leafing,' which she greatly admires, and the outer lettering—every point is discussed with great vivacity. Here are passages from her letters :

" This is a beautiful proof sheet, and makes me feel very contrite for the (obviously) unjust accusation I brought last night against the House of Constable. There are so few, and such unimportant alterations needed, that this sheet need not be sent again. I feel altogether in a penitent mood this morning, that sort of penitence that belongs to pre-determined transgression, as I do *not* mean to send you a preface. I like a plain, unannounced entrance, and do not see the need of any prelude, except in the case of a second edition." Again, " Dear Mr Constable, I must say of my proofs what Louis Quatorze said to the Pretender, 'that my best wish for them and for myself is never to see them again.' " Again, " I have attended to the notes, but feel rather appalled at the

severe tone of the remarks sent. Does it mean that these mistakes *cannot* now be rectified? If so, there is a melancholy consolation in reflecting how very seldom people read or care about notes. They can still be read as generally edifying reflections, without particular connection with the text."

Again, "Not the device on the outside, please! not to make it like a pretty little good book (I hope this is not conceited?) but to have a sober, student-like aspect." Again, "I cannot say that it realises all that I had wished, because I had never been able to figure to myself exactly how I should like it to look, but I can say it leaves nothing to wish, not in any one respect, and that its whole aspect gratifies a love for finish and quality which is part of my very nature, though as a philosopher I am obliged in general to content myself with what falls far, far short. I am delighted with its sober, chastened exterior, and the inner richness of the beautiful paper and type set off not a little by the red edging, and I think it looks just like 'a bosom book,' though I was not allowed to call it so." Finally, when all details are settled and the book is out, she writes: "Your letters are always so cheering! When we were printing I think *you* did all the Patience, and now that it is before the public it is *you* do all the Hope. I have had, however, deep encouragement from my dear friend, Mrs Butler. She is delighted with it, type and vignette and all."

And now for the people themselves. It has been said that romance did not come her way. When asked if Philip, the hero both of *Two Friends* and of *Colloquia Crucis*, was a real man and drawn from life, she would smile, and look a little knowing, and say nothing; that was the nearest approach to a mystery of which she ever gave a hint, and even that was nothing but a gleam of mischief, for, as she carefully explained in later years, Philip represents the simpler, stronger side of her own mind, at once more believing and more executive, while she reserves her misgivings and contemplative delays for

the speaker with the first personal pronoun. In every life that is not stunted and lean, there must be some affection that has in it a touch of enthusiastic admiration, a giving away of all the powers of the heart, and, strange as it may seem, I cannot but think that her overflowing, many-sided nature needed a whole family on which to pour its varied stock of treasures, and that this ultra-pure and exquisite love was the real romance of her life.

The friendship began thus. A lady called Lucia (surname unknown) was acquainted with both parties, and pressed from both sides that they should make an effort to meet. Mrs Greenwell, who generally exerted a sort of passive resistance to any new acquaintances made by her daughter, was for once wholly favourable, and Dora writes on 20th July 1860: "I feel now that we ought to know each other, and with as little loss of time as possible. The Unjust Steward is in all just things a good model." So a visit was planned for the first days of September, when Mr Constable and his eldest son, Archibald, then an undergraduate at St Andrews University, came to Durham for a few days on a journey south. From the very first she had a presentiment that amounted to a conviction that this was one of the best things life had to bring her, and she expresses herself with unguarded interest and affection.

After they had left she writes to Mr Constable: "My Mother has talked of nothing but you and Archie since you left, and my thoughts have been much in the same direction, and oh, with what solid, substantial comfort! Your visit has been indeed 'the substance of things hoped for.' Sometimes in first meeting people whom I have loved and admired greatly, even in being drawn to them I have felt an almost aching sense that this was but a momentary refreshment, something that by its very nature would pass out of my life like an odour or a sound, and a loneliness of spirit from which I sometimes suffer greatly, would shut down upon me as before. But now that I have seen you, and am able, as a friend of mine

would express it, 'to pin myself to you with a large strong pin,' I feel as regards you and yours a sense of property, I would even say a sense of *adoption*, for that is the feeling that prevails."

These are fairly strong words for so short a stay, but evidently the two men were equally delighted with her, and a return visit was planned for one of the first days of October, and thus she, who seems scarcely to have left home independently before, now made a good long stay with her new friends in Edinburgh. This was the epoch-making visit, not more than two days were spent in the ordinary formalities, and then she plunged headlong into a sea of friendship. With Mrs Constable she at once fell in love—one can call it nothing less—and she remained first, dearest, and best, though it becomes evident that she was a poor correspondent compared with her husband. She loved every one of the household, from old Uncle David, who lived with them in a kind of seclusion, down to the babies in the nursery.

But let her speak for herself in detail, for here are two or three charming letters addressed to her mother.

*8th Oct.* 1860.—" Dearest Mother, If I had a pink sheet of writing paper by me I should have taken it up, for it is all *couleur de rose*. I feel quite one with this dear family, and find them so interesting as to care little comparatively for what is outside, though I should think the world has scarcely a finer view to shew than that before me as I write—looking over the grounds of Holyrood full upon Leith, with 'the blue bay' or Firth of Forth beyond, and the hills of Fife opposite. But let me begin with Sunday. Archie and I set forth to Dr Hanna's Church, which is half-way up the Castle Hill. We had a beautiful sermon from Dr Hanna, and I liked the service very much, and in some respects better than our own.

" We returned through the Canongate, the older part of the town, where Archie, who has a very historical turn of mind, had a great deal to tell me. In the afternoon we went to their Church, and *you* would have envied me

my companion, Mr Constable himself. In the afternoon he came and read aloud to me, and gave me some singular and affecting details of their family history." She then goes on to relate some touching incidents that left a curiously mixed household on Mrs Constable's hands, but, she goes on to say: "There is nothing in the house but peace, and plenty, and order, and love. There is *perfect truth* too, everything spoken of just as it is, and coming from God."

She concludes with: "Mrs Constable is after my heart's content, full of romantic feeling, and yet so practical. And now she has come in to sit with me over the fire and have a confidential chat; and very soon the dear man will be coming in against dinner. It is very well for your heart that you cannot see him at home, he is so altogether delightful."

Again, on *6th Nov.* 1860.—"Dearest Mother, This home is quite 'a little heaven below' in all ways. Mrs Constable is such a woman of faith and prayer, something like Madame Guyon, only she is so simple and quiet that one only finds it out by degrees. She is of a retired nature, but seems like the soul of everything, ordering all things in wisdom and warming them all by love. Mr Constable is of a different temperament, but the result is perfect harmony; in this house you never hear an unkind word spoken *to or of* a human being. As to the servants, it is wonderful what they get through; only four women" (domestic arrangements are explained)—"yet they are never fussed or overdone, but there is comfort everywhere." She then tells how Mrs Constable has seven dinners to think of every day, not only for the nursery, the schoolroom, the servants and themselves, such as is incidental to every large family, but three separate invalid relatives were under the roof, and had to be considered as well, yet, she adds, "one never hears a word about housekeeping, and Mr Constable says whenever he comes in, at whatever hour, he finds his wife doing nothing, and Dora helping her to do it."

Once more, 10*th Nov.* 1860.—" My time is drawing to a close, and I feel anxious to be with you again. As to my dear friends here, the parting is a trifle, because we have gained such a root in one another's hearts. Mrs Constable says it is not only the affection my visit has called forth, but the mental pleasure has been also very great. In some ways we seem to have stirred each other up, and I can but look upon the friendship as altogether providential; to me it is so full of *comfort*, and that which so deeply refreshes the heart." She goes on to tell of a Mr and Mrs Cowan, who were delightful people to know, " entirely devoted to practical benevolence "; she relates how two of their daughters had lately married and had between them " secured a fair amount of poverty," and ends with saying, " Mrs Constable thinks they were very clever to get husbands with the usual equipment of wits, eyes, arms, and legs, for their father was such a friend to the unfortunate and afflicted that they did not see many eligibles. We shall soon now have a good chat.

" Your ever loving daughter, D. G. "

This opening of the new door, this visit, was greatly valued on the other side as well, and indeed they insisted that they were the chief gainers all through. The children were utterly unconscious that they had anything to give, as will be seen by the account given by two of them, as viewed from the height of later years, and both will show with what overflowing affection she befriended the whole family at once.

The first record is from the hand of Maimie,[1] the elder of the two little girls who formed " the schoolroom " at that period; " I remember so well my sister Katie's [2] and my excitement when Dora first came to visit us. She must have arrived in the evening after we had gone to bed, for we first met at breakfast. I was fascinated by her; I had never met anyone like her before. She wore a blue silk dress with wide sleeves with lace in them,

[1] Mrs Forsyth. [2] Mrs Bruce.

and a lace fichu, and the most wonderful silver buttons, rather large, chased ones, on her dress. Her hair was dark, parted, and rather full over the ears, her eyes dark brown and wonderfully vivacious, and so kind and smiling. She was rather pale, and her smile was delightful; she took you at once into her confidence, and you felt as if you had 'known each other always' at once. I was a very shy child, but never with her, for she seemed to understand. One thing which delighted my sister and me above everything, was her love and appreciation of our Mother, the Lucy she writes about so often. We were accustomed to have our Father admired—he always was—but our Mother was so unselfish and so quiet that people did not always discover how wonderful she was—both clever and beautiful—and this Dora seemed to do at once. So Katie and I knew she was one of the 'elect,' and were ready to adore her. She made us all so happy.

"After our lessons were over, she said, 'Now Maimie and Katie must come out with me,' and we had a sort of walk in fairyland. We shopped, and she gave us a charming tea-set for ourselves, a book to put photographs in, and some photographs to put into it; I remember Garibaldi, the Queen of Naples, and Princess Alexandra were among those she gave us. She also introduced us to a new sweet, 'fondants' pink and white they were, and in the evening she was going to teach us to play 'Commerce,' and the fondants were to be given as prizes. She seemed to take us all to her heart, and my little brothers too. We would have done anything for her. Her delightful voice, and her laugh—these alone made one happy! I never saw her after I was grown up, and I never stayed at Durham, as my sister Lizzie[1] did so often, but I can see her still so clearly."

The next description is fuller as from a slightly older mind, and is from the pen of the schoolboy, Tom.[2] It runs thus: "In 1860 Miss Greenwell (in less than a

[1] Mrs Berkley. [2] Rev. Thomas Constable.

fortnight we had all learned to call her Dora, including my youngest brother aged three) paid her first visit to us at 34 Royal Terrace, Edinburgh. I had never before seen anyone of mature years put herself so completely on a level with us children. I say 'put herself on a level,' but I do not believe there was the least bit of conscious levelling. She naturally adapted herself to us, and actually became our 'playmate,' as she loved to call herself. With my eldest sister she would have all manner of girlish fun and pleasantness; with my elder brother she would read and discuss philosophy, poetry, theology, and literature of any kind. She and I entered upon a course of *Henry's First Latin Book* together, I being supposed to be the teacher, though our knowledge was pretty much upon a par, and somehow or other even 'Balbus building the wall,' and 'Caius beholding the great snake's great body,' became quite interesting personages.

"The quantities of illustration, playful and otherwise, she would throw in, her suggestive remarks, her little bits of comparative philology, and her most grateful praise of me as a teacher all glorified the lesson. No one praised more pleasantly, or was more thoroughly persuaded of the good that appropriate praise does. My 'pleasant voice' was commended, and it was so *much* nicer to have me as a master than a certain tutor who had always come in lemon-coloured gloves, and who bowed a great deal. She used to play with me unweariedly at chess too, and for my little sisters delightful evening amusements were at once instituted, an old-fashioned card-game, with bonbons for prizes. With my father and mother she had the closest and most delightful intercourse of all. How well I remember her keen delight in and appreciation of my father's wit! No one laughed so pleasantly or so easily, and I never heard such graceful badinage; of course she could not sting, but no one hit the nail more exactly on the head." [1]

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 157.

But even the most delightful visit has its end, and after nearly six weeks of breathing this new air, she had to return to Durham. She writes: "Dear beloved friends, Oh how happy do I feel to be now sitting at home again and to know that there are such people as you in the world! Yes, that *I have you for a good possession.* I felt so sorrowful at parting, my heart was like Sir Isaac Newton's apple. I might have found out the attraction of gravity by its weight. I could not rouse myself to take a last look at Arthur's Seat, and was not able for a long while to take comfort in any one thought or even recollection, except just one, and that was my dearest Lucy's pocket-handkerchief; it gave me a feeling of communion and fellowship, that, and her dear, dear hand. The lady opposite proved a very obliging and cordial person. I fear I must have appeared to her a lump or a dump. However, we shared Lucy's wine between us, drinking out of the same little glass like two advanced Christians. The first thing that did me good was seeing Newcastle, canny Newcastle, and at the sight of the coal-pits all sorts of cheerful associations, and that sort of comfort which belongs to home, at once revived. I found my dear Mother well and cheery, and enchanted to see me again, and to hear all about everything, and to rejoice with me over every detail of my visit. I can only love you and bless you, dear, dear friends, you who have been so good to me, and so good *for* me, like fire, and food, and gladness, and I know not which is best. Send me a kiss in a letter very soon, and let me end like my great grandmother's letters—'And so no more from her who is your friend,' Dora Greenwell."

Archie, the University student, naturally was not at home for a good part of this visit, so on 1st December his friend writes him a long letter; part is about Lord Bacon, and Macaulay's essay on Bacon, which she considers the finest of his writings, but she comes back to the beloved home toward the end, saying: "I took cold just before leaving and was kept to the house, which, however,

was quite a season of luxury, as you will believe when I tell you that I had your dear, dear mamma to nurse me and talk to, and Lizzy to play with me, and Tommy read me aloud the 'Lotos Eaters,' you cannot imagine how beautifully, and it took us quite into Classic and Mythologic regions. I made great friends with Tommy before I came away, a silent, happy sort of friendship, as I do not think, except upon this single occasion, we ever had a real talk together."

On 3rd January 1861, she reviews the past year, and writes to her friends thus: "Oh, it was a happy year, the departed one, that brought us together, and it ought to be marked with white. Sometimes it gives me a sort of shiver to think that we might have missed each other 'quite easily,' the world is so wide. Only I am sure *it was meant* to be otherwise. Oh, how grateful do I feel to Lucia! Let us call her Santa Lucia. People I doubt not have been canonised for less essential benefits than she has been in introducing me to you."

The same happy visits were repeated; early in the year Mr Constable, going south on business, stayed for some three nights at Durham on his way, and the record remains in a letter to Mrs Constable dated 15th February 1861: "I must write to let Lucy know, in case she has not heard it already, that her husband never looked so well, or was altogether so nice and dear as on this last visit; only it was hard, after cheering and comforting our hearts, to take so much of them away with him. Worse than the first original raid." "It was a visit such as one has not often, so quiet and settled, and full of true communion. We love to think and talk of it, only my Mother says she cannot now *do* any longer without knowing Lucy; she seems to feel herself almost aggrieved in only having heard about her. I think my seeing him has made me want my dear Lucy more than ever." "Oh, how sweet, how precious are those things which one can safely number among the things which cannot be shaken, and which a good shake only roots firmer!"

So a visit was planned and carried out for the following autumn, and as she always had a special touch of admiration for Archie, who was indeed a lad to be proud of, she cannot forbear writing thus to his parents: 12th August 1861.—"Is there any chance of Archie being at home during the coming visit? There are not many in the world to be met with like him, such a bright ideal of youth and all that specially belongs to it. Somehow I always feel *safer* and happier about him than I do about most bright and goodly things, as if there were a sustaining element in him which sometimes lacks in others. I think in future years he and I shall be able to exchange gifts of price with each other."

The only actual record of the stay is in a letter to her mother, though even that (being undated) may possibly be referred to the next September. It says: "Dr Hanna and I had a solitary chat in the twilight. He is a delightful man, full of sympathy, refinement, and deep, pure Christian feeling. He gave me an account of the extraordinary awakening to repentance and faith that is now going on in Edinburgh amongst the *quite* lowest classes; people who probably have never known what it is to have a thought beyond those belonging to mere material life. This has been brought about chiefly by very humble means. One of the evangelists, by name Weaver, is an English collier, a rude unenlightened man except in spiritual things only. Dr Hanna said at first he was deterred from joining in their great meetings, seeing many things to shock his taste and even his judgment, but what he had seen lately of real heart-work connected with them had made him change entirely, and determined to lend whatever power he himself had to the work."

Second experiences of the same region are sometimes disenchanting, but this was not, but only intensified her affection. After returning and settling in at home she writes: 24th November 1861.—"It is impossible to describe the sweetness of my thoughts of you all, and how you have become what Hawthorne calls 'part of

the immoveable furniture of my heart.' When I wake up in the morning, I seem to be with you still, until I have time to get thoroughly awake. I never felt my life so inseparably blended with that of any friends, although I have so many that are dear to me. I cannot feel that I have lost my heart among you, no, rather I have found it, and with you how much of hope, and of cheering, sustaining stimulus, which my own heart naturally is deficient in, and never able to provide itself with out of its own resources ; they are too slender."

Here is true love. Those who know the subtler regions of the human heart will find indisputable proof of it in this account of her first waking moments, an experience not possible except to those whose heart is united to that of another. It was the magic touch of this happy community that opened up her sealed flower-buds. This view is earnestly deprecated by Mr Archibald Constable himself, writing to me some forty years later. He insists that she was the giver and they the receivers, that she came upon them ready-made, full-blown, having already published two books, and with a wealth of thought and brilliant powers of conversation such as they had not known before, and that the whole family felt themselves " enriched and irradiated " (those are his words) by her appearance among them. Every word of this is true, and yet the tenor of her life will not allow me to change my opinion. It was the outlet, the freedom, the response, that brought the sunshine to her heart.

If we continue her story we find it difficult to gather up the expressions of affection that fill her notes, for they are like a field of buttercups standing in the sun. But here are one or two more: 22nd February 1862.—" I often recall the day Lucy and I spent at Penicuik. Josephine and I used to talk about ' Saints days,' days hallowed in feeling on which a sort of consecration rests, that shine out of one's life's calendar for ever, whatever may come before or after them. That day was one of these to me. It was on that day I began to feel so very

near to her, and I loved so too to see such a picture of family union, and cheerfulness, and love. It made my heart expand." "How sweet is the equality, the community of affection! In that I am sure I shall always be a publican and a sinner, giving indeed, but 'hoping to receive as much again,' however good a Christian I may grow in other respects to be."

History repeated itself with great exactitude for several years, and it is after the third or fourth of these autumn visits that she again writes with a full heart: "Sometimes when we are talking about you, I feel that your faces form a loving background, sketched in indistinctly like the faces in the Madonna San Sisto. I often recall our last evening. I do not know how it is that things never can be so sweet and full as they are at the last. Sometimes I feel as if it might be so with life itself. It keeps back the richest wine. Our talk was inexpressibly comforting to me! Oh, what it is to me to have such hearts, and an open door between them and mine."

Now that the Constables have been introduced, we must leave them for a while. Is there any earthly good whatever that is wholly pure? Is there no shadow at all in this bright picture? A change of thought there certainly is, but whether for the worse or not, it is hard to determine. About her first two books, *The Patience of Hope* and *A Present Heaven*, there is a kind of sweet austerity that is unmatched, a grave but lovely certainty, as of the air of the cloister. She is far too well read not to be aware of the storms raging outside, but personally she does not feel the blast; in every book written after 1862, she herself has left the shelter, and is in the Renaissance, in the thick of the great combat. It is not in her case between Good and Evil, so much as between the highest Good the world and human nature can offer, and the restraining spirit of Christ, which at any rate ignores where it does not condemn. The fine poetic sympathies which at first were imaginative, now—from contact with a bright, springing youth such as she herself had never

known—become the sympathies of actual experience, and the battle goes hard with her.

These subjects of grave perplexity we must leave for discussion until, at the close of her life, we endeavour to sum up the message she held in her heart for us all, but let us now revert to the Constables and say that Dora Greenwell has no true lover but who tenders to them heartfelt gratitude. In closing we will select a sweet and humble little song addressed to the ever-beloved Lucy, once more assuring her that the gain of the friendship is entirely on the side of the writer.

Oh, hast thou won my heart, my love ?
What gain to thee ? what gain ?
It plights thee with no golden ring,
It decks thee with no chain.
A simple thing, yet it will bring
To thee, my love, no pain.
To give thee rest,
To make thee blest,
It hath been ever fain, my love,
It hath been ever fain.

Oh, have I won thy heart, my love ?
What gain to me ! what gain !
What brooding calm, what soothing balm,
What sweet release from pain !
Through sudden rest my spirit guessed
What hour to me it came.
And day by day
I mark its stay,
Through comfort of the same, my love,
Through comfort of the same.

*Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER V

## WORK AMONG THE POOR

THE life-work allotted to Dora Greenwell was obviously to teach by writing. Now such work cannot be done by thought only; there must be practice as well. Practice acts as a stern check on speculative exuberance, but proves also to be a vivid and encouraging corroboration of steps toward truth that we have taken in blind faith. Goethe was right when he sang:

> Grau ist alle Theorie,
> Und grün des Lebens goldner Baum.

There are two elevating forces always at work on the mind and soul of man, that of the Greek, or the spirit of cultivation, and that of the Saint, or the spirit of communion with God, and as this latter implies "forsaking all else," the two are apt to get into collision. In the heart of our prophet we have a picture of the antagonism of these regal adversaries, and her life and vocation cannot be understood without a deep appreciation of this prolonged conflict. Now we know that the Faith of Christ appeals not to the intellect and reason only, but to the "whole man," and it is not to the thinker with infinite leisure at command that the Spirit of God reveals the depths of truth, so much as to the worker, to the soul that is spending love and energy, and almost inevitably tears of disappointment, on the raw material of human nature which lies within arm's length of every one of us. "The poor ye have always with you."

It was without encouragement, without even a hint of approval from anyone in the circle of her friends, that Dora Greenwell plunged her hands into masses of misery,

thereby unconsciously strengthening her own soul, and lifting it above visions and dreams. Hence her pages have living worth. Whatever conclusions she reaches—and her definite conclusions are but few—we know they have stood the test of practical experience.

*The poor*—that is exactly the right word by which to describe the objects of her compassion. She did not labour for those who have but little money and a narrow scope of life, but are hearty and strong in their prescribed lines, not for the better housing or better education of village communities, but for the really *poor*, the poor in health, in friends, and in wits, for the weak, disadvantaged, unattractive, forlorn fellow-beings that are hidden away here and there, and which everybody may find by looking for them. We don't see them because we don't want to see them. They are dead weights on life, not helpers but hindrances. But there *they are*, and this woman of unblinking sincerity and world-embracing heart could not rest until the best of human resources had been expended upon them.

Her friend, Mr William Dorling, writes: "Her eye quickly and vividly caught sight of all the weak and sad elements in human existence, and her heart eagerly responded to the faintest cry for pity and help, even from the remotest and deepest regions of human suffering. The more peculiar and touchingly difficult the conditions of suffering were, and the further they were removed from the observation and concern of the great world, the more pertinaciously did she endeavour to discover their origin, and to administer a remedy." [1] That is a good description. It was the inarticulate wail that caught her sensitive ear, and, where there was no wail at all but the people implicated were quite satisfied with their position, and resented being raised and cleaned and set on their feet, then it was that the full power of her altruistic solicitude was aroused, and that she worked her very best. Moreover, so great was her attractive

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 143.

power that her "best" was a formidable best, and she helped to clear public opinion and to open up the way to many other less gifted but equally diligent workers.

In this fashion she gradually stepped down the social ladder, until she landed herself among the pauper imbeciles, and there she spent the practical efforts of the few prime and fruitful years of her life. No one can get lower than that. There is nothing lower. There she laboured and her reward of success was considerable.

She had private friends in humble life, of course, and most wonderfully and individually good she was to them. It was as if the faculty of repulsion were left out of her. She was never shocked, though she was sometimes grieved, and whatever happened she was boundlessly compassionate. She writes to Archie Constable: "I intended to write for I have much to say, but there are many visitors, old friends, humble saints whom one must see and listen to (if not quite on the very verge of distraction), and one must be *glad* to see too—I have one waiting in the kitchen at this moment—and here and there a poor sinner who takes yet more time; so I have got nothing but love to send you, which, as George Herbert says, is 'a sweetness ready proved.' Copy that out, and save expense"—which last sentence is evidently a joke known to both of them.

But the wonder lay in her more public efforts, those made in the workhouse and the jail, where all that is worst in human nature is heaped together, and we ask, Is it right that a soul rare and gifted, a soul capable of subtle and delicate work, should handle all this dirt and disorder? Is it not a foolish waste of God's endowments? "Saint Josephine," at least, did not think so. Hers was a mind less imaginative, but far more strong and virile, having her whole character more executive and, as it were, more finished; she too could write exquisite prose, as is proved even by the short notes appended to *The Patience of Hope*, which was dedicated to her, and yet not one doubt clouded her mind as to her own mission.

That razor was set to cut blocks, and it did it. Hearken to her sweet words: "Looking my Liberator in the face, can my friends wonder that I have taken my place—oh with what infinite contentment!—by the side of her, 'the woman in the city which was a sinner,' of whom He, her Liberator and mine, said, as He can also say of me, '*This woman* hath not ceased to kiss my feet.'" [1]

And for our prophet too, contact with the rough edges and the stern realities of life, and even, perhaps, its disgusting sights, was the best training possible. Her dreams were so vivid, her airy regions so enchanting, that a good counter-balancing weight was needed. Such contact kept her straight, as a ballast of useless stones will prevent the ship from being the sport of the waves, and make it answer steadily to the helm. Her writings are always unfinished, but never for an instant weak or sentimental, and I rather think we owe this to her paupers and idiots. She writes with a kind of self-distrustful sweet humility to Mrs Constable, undated: "I seem to live a life of shreds and patches, and very small ones too, a dash at this and a dab at that, but still by living in the moment I really get through a good deal, and have returned to both my Jail and Penitentiary work. I find there is nothing which is such a sheet-anchor to the heart, the soul, and the mind also, as a settled quiet bit of work for Christ. I think a woman can scarcely be otherwise than miserable when intellect is the leading chord in her life; it takes one, after all, into such a desolate region." [2]

But let us now trace out the lines of work as she descended the ladder one step after another. She began late, of course. She did everything late. There was nothing at all done at Greenwell Ford, but at Ovingham, in stopping to rest at a roadside cottage, she saw a little girl, deaf and dumb; that was the beginning of everything, for, if her prose is desultory her practical works

[1] *Life of Josephine Butler*, by Prof. J. Stuart, p. 16.
[2] Unpublished Letters.

were not, and she never rested until she got the child admitted into the good School for the Deaf and Dumb at Newcastle, where she was trained, and proved an admirable success. The next step, as we have already seen, was Golbourne, and there she rubbed off her shyness among the brusque independent people, and acquired her pleasant manner with the poor, always gentle, and yet with a touch of the democratic abruptness with which one may talk to anybody one recognises as an equal. But it was at Durham she exercised her talents to the full, and found fuel enough to keep the flame of her benevolence always at the heat of a blast-furnace. Such a heat is catching, and after a few years of rather discouraging efforts, she had a good blaze kindled round her.

The workhouse was, of course, the place to which she went to find the inexpressibly miserable, and there she visited with the utmost assiduity for many years. In her little article called "A Midnight Dawn," [1] she gives a long quotation from the pen of a friend who was equally busy in a neighbouring town. Before 1860 it must be remembered there was little or no classification among the inmates of the Union Workhouses, and this friend writes: "The decent aged poor, the insane and weak-minded, innocent children and respectable people out of work, were indiscriminately mixed with the vilest and most dissolute characters. My experience of life has been a very varied one, yet I can truly say that all that it has shown me of abandoned wickedness and utter hopeless misery has fallen short of what I have encountered within the walls of the Union at Stockton-on-Tees. At the time I speak of there was such an absence of moral check, that I have myself heard a woman in the very wantonness of iniquity deliberately teaching a little child of between three and four years old the most revolting language." . . . "The chief control was vested in the person of a nurse, a woman of drunken habits, violent

[1] *A Basket of Summer Fruit.*

in her conduct, and exceedingly profane in language. She stormed up and down the large room, ordering all things at her will."

We have no such detailed description of Durham, but evidently it was nearly as bad, and we who love our prophet cannot but a little grudge that she should step into the deepest, slimiest mud of life; but she did so fearlessly, and under the curious title "Hardened in Good" gives many of her experiences one after the other.[1] The extraordinary patience she showed, the contentment with but a half success, if so she might pull out some poor soul from the extremes of the abyss, the shrewd ingenuity with which she dealt with both "shiftiness and shiftlessness," as she used to designate the mixture of cunning and slackness that besets the ingrained pauper, all show her to us in a new light. The younger women she follows about from the gaol to the penitentiary, or gets them into some "Refuge" or "Home," and after long trouble will even still make excuses for "the terrible fit of restlessness" that comes upon them after months of good behaviour, when without warning they may plunge back into the pit.

Rescue Homes were not at all then the places they now are, and her real successes were few. Boys she got into the coasting-service, of which the ships are very many along that northern shore, and she never seems to have abandoned a case, until the object of her benevolence was dead or could not be traced.

She used to say, "Kind-hearted people working together from different points of the social compass may accomplish wonders of ministry and comfort,"[2] and she was indefatigable in hunting up the more respectable relatives of these wretched beings. Without sufficient hope or initiative to set out on the difficult task of reclamation, such relatives would gladly fall in with some plan she had already set on foot, and sometimes she would get an outfit for a boy, or shelter given

[1] *Essays*, p. 69. [2] Unpublished Letters.

to a girl while she was getting her clothes ready for respectable service. To her dear Archie Constable (in a letter undated, but probably about 1867) she writes with a strong sense of humour over her plots and machinations, "Next to that purest of earthly felicities, the doing good by stealth and having it found out by accident, I know of few more refined than that of making a present to one friend out of the pocket of another."

Among the older vagrants and criminals—for she visited the jail as often as the workhouse—she showed herself at home by most penetrating insight. She greatly preferred a thief to a beggar. The thief, she would say, is alert and active, and has excellent powers which are capable of being turned upon better objects, but the beggar "brings into play nothing but lying and laziness, and, from his habit of parading and counterfeiting misery, and calling out pity only to deceive and mock it, induces a character more utterly mean and worthless than any other." Yet she despaired of not one, no, not a single one. Hearken to her theory, most beautifully stated: "In Christianity there is an element of tenderness and hope, which is always, and we may say inevitably, absent in Nature which accurately knows its own scope and limits, and leaves on one side all that it finds either injured or radically deficient, saying of it, 'That which is wanting cannot be numbered.' But the reserve forces of Christianity are boundless, even those of infinity itself; it knows not how to despair. How should it do so, when in its own career it has itself so often passed from ignominy to glory?"[1] and she goes on to describe in fitting words how the lowly manger was accompanied by the song of the heavenly host, and how the Cross with its attendant malefactors was only separated by a few hours from the triumph of Easter.

In practice her belief in little presents was great, and even increased with experience. "Pin-cushions, needle-books, small religious pictures—all things of the most

[1] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 144.

trifling value," were her delight, and she did not object to their being regarded as "charms" indicating her presence. A tract, however good, indicating the presence of the Saviour, was too high a step to be taken at once, and she only gave them when she was sure of their being read; to awaken independent spiritual life was her final object, but for months and even years she would content herself with her pin-cushions.

One most touching story she tells of a girl just about to be dismissed from prison, debating with herself, "Shall I go back to the old life, or shall I try to be a real good lass?" In packing her bundle she laid out on her bed all the little coloured texts she had received, with needle-book and yard-measure, and said to herself, "I can't find it in my heart to throw them all away, so I must just go straight off and see the lady." It was objected, "But, Ann, the things were your own, why did you talk of throwing them away?" With quick and sudden feeling poor Ann replied, "And do you think, ma'am, I would take anything *you* had given me to the sort of places *I* go to? I would rive them to pieces sooner." [1]

She never wanted even the most hardened criminals shut out from the ordinary give-and-take of society, but was always trying to include them. Her democratic spirit extended not only over lack of education but also over lack of virtue. When distress arose among the ribbon-weavers of Coventry, the very first collection made for them in the north was from Durham jail, where £4, 10s. was raised, "Of course with the help of friends and officials, but the prisoners themselves contributing most eagerly, one noted thief sending in his last sixpence." In this she expresses the greatest satisfaction, as "giving them an opportunity of claiming a place in the great social bond."

This, and a good deal more of the same tenor, is in undated letters to Mrs Constable. With the same generous spirit she would take infinite trouble with a work-

[1] *Essays*, p. 89.

house tea: lights, flowers, coloured paper round the cakes, all must be "just right" before she was satisfied, for she always declared it was the trouble taken, the thought, the individual selection that really mattered, and used to say to the helpers she inspired with her own ardent spirit, "If they are so old and stupid that they can't see the torch of Benevolence waving about, we must put it so close to them that they can *feel the heat of it on their faces*." In like manner she never spoke to the more inveterate criminals about quiet respectability, but always told them tales of heroism and self-sacrifice, and declared they responded far more warmly than did the comparatively harmless, the "great army of the beaten in life," who were far more numerous.[1]

It is needless to say that she had many disappointments. There was a specially turbulent boy with whom she took endless trouble, and at last got him into the coasting-service; he came to say good-bye in his new uniform, full of pride, and all was at last going well, but within a week there was a storm, and her boy was the only one of the crew drowned. Again, she was just getting to feel her feet in the jail, when there was a burst of wickedness such as had never been known before. She writes: "We have had much distress in the Jail. An extraordinary and causeless outbreak arose among the women, clamours of every description kept up day and night, attended with such frantic violence, and altogether unprecedented inconceivable vileness of language, that they have reminded me of the demoniacal possession of Scripture. The poor, good, respectable female officers have been quite worn out, and all the friends of the prison greatly saddened."[2] She learned the lesson that Miss Octavia Hill put into trenchant words when she said it had been the great lesson of her lifetime to learn that "it isn't the stye makes the pig, it's the pig makes the stye." But for all these sorrows, she went on her way in calmness and hope.

[1] See "Hardened in Good," *Essays*. [2] Unpublished Letters.

The interest in imbeciles began in 1867 with the founding of the Royal Albert Asylum at Lancaster for the reception of the idiots of the seven northern counties. The secretary was for many years a Mr James Diggens, and this discerning man saw he had found in Miss Greenwell a vein of pure gold, and exploited her powers well for the good of his helpless charges. He gives long and very sympathetic reminiscences of their intercourse, with lists of publications for the benefit of the Asylum, and he evidently worked up her interest to a pitch of flaming zeal such as could affect hundreds. He writes: "She had the deepest sympathy with suffering of all kinds, but she did not hastily take up any work of philanthropy. Before her heart moved to action, her judgment had to be convinced. I well remember how, at my first visit, she plied me with many shrewd questions as to the feasibility of our work, and sought information as to its practical results. She gradually warmed to the cause, and eventually developed into an attractive centre of influence." [1]

Mr Dorling adds that "she could not espouse any cause with half her heart," but, her interest once engaged, she could not help looking on any special branch of benevolence as the most important and the most imperious claim in the world. It is very evident, that, had she not been so extraordinarily attractive, so magnetic in every fibre of her being, her imbeciles would have been a great bore; but of this one cannot find a trace.

We cannot make out that she had personal contact with the "poor things" as she had with the paupers and criminals, but was impelled onward solely by her instinct to walk beside the very last straggler in the moving crowd of life, to remember "the most forgotten soul in Purgatory." But money, oh *how* she needed money! Never before, and never after, did she want it so much, and writes to Mr Diggens in December 1867: "I never

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 145.

feel so worldly, *i.e.* so inclined to make capital out of everything, money and rank included, as when I am engaged in a philanthropic object. One must work every string." [1] Her own resources were almost nil, consisting in a very slender dress-allowance given by her mother, who knew that anything the least over necessity would at once be given away. But by this date her popularity had risen, and there was a sale for her works, which brought in a modest sum, and this she at once devoted to her imbeciles.

There was one story she loved to tell against herself. She imperatively needed a new dress, and saw a beautiful blue poplin exposed in a shop-window in a narrow street in Durham. She loved bright colours, the winter afternoon was dark, and she did not see that the tint was of that aggressive nature that may be described as "Rickett's." Though she inquired the price per yard she made no calculation as to the total, and when the parcel was unpacked next morning in the sunny drawing-room both the colour and the bill filled her with dismay. "Oh, mother," she lamented, "just look here. I fear I can never, never wear it, and here's all my money gone!" The old lady glanced over her spectacles at the eye-aching folds, and said testily, "Well, Dora, you needn't complain. You always said if you made any money, you would spend it on some idiot or other." [2]

On the literary side she managed more effectively. Not knowing enough herself, she first got permission to republish the writings of others. There was "Harmless Johnny," from *Blackwood's Magazine*, and "The Wow of Rivven," from *Good Words* (this by George Macdonald), and "A Day at Earlswood," from the *Daily News*, and many more. She herself translated a most pathetic little tale from Madame de Gasparin, and entitled it, "A Poor Boy."

Very diligently she read up the subject, and in the

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 146.
[2] Mrs M'Chesney, *Verbal Reminiscences.*

summer of 1868, beginning to feel a little confidence in her knowledge, in September of that year she published an admirable article in the *North British Review* called, "On the Education of the Imbecile." This did more good than all the others put together, for it attracted the attention of the medical faculty.

Mr Diggens supplied a good deal of the material and all the statistics, and she supplied the reflections and the part needed to appeal to the philosophic mind. Concise and lucid—presenting, oh such a strong contrast to her religious works !—she summed up all that was then known on the subject, and even added to the store. "The connection between soul and body—abnormal phases of humanity—the psychological aspect—France the pioneer —Seguin's methods, and Voisin's theory of instruction—the study of predilections—how love elicits intelligence—the marvellous results obtainable"; [1] such is only a part of her index, as she works through the whole subject with unflagging hope.

This article was discussed at meetings of medical science, and quoted freely in the pulpit, and it was as though the whole nation awoke to facts previously ignored. As it was unsigned, there was much discussion as to which eminent doctor could have written it, and in some minds the astonishment was boundless when the authorship was discovered. But with this triumph, for such undoubtedly it was, we must leave her work among "The Poor."

Heaven and Earth have been
More near, since Earth has seen
Its God walk Earth as Man ; since Heaven has shown
A Man upon its throne.
The street and market-place
Grow holy ground ; each face
(Pale faces, marked with care,
Dark toil-worn brows) grows fair ;
King's children are these all, though want and sin
Have marred their beauty glorious within.

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 151.

We may not pass them but with reverent eye,
As when we see some goodly temple graced
To be Thy dwelling, ruined and defaced
The haunt of sad and doleful creatures, lie
Bare to the sky, and open to the gust,
It grieveth us to see Thine House laid waste,
It pitieth us to see it in the dust.

*From* "The Reconciler," *Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER VI

## GOSSIP AND REMINISCENCES

THERE are in every life a good many trifling incidents that may rightly come under the heading of "gossip," and all these rise in importance if the outer tenor of that life has held its way without marked events. If in the life of a woman we have love, marriage, children, and bereavement, and if we can watch her passing through them all, we can see her character tested, and, as we lay down the book, we feel that we know her. Or if there is a great public work on hand, like that of Saint Catherine or Saint Josephine, we can gauge strength by the amount of opposition endured. But when a life is outwardly so entirely uneventful as that of our seer and prophet, we have to treasure up very small incidents indeed, if we would not only have her as a voice crying in the wilderness, but be enabled to picture her as a complete person. Let me try to gather up some of these and present them.

The Constable family have most kindly sent me a large sheaf of old letters as yet unpublished, and though the main body of these are mere scraps, and the majority are moreover undated except by the day of the week, I will collect characteristic sentences. The first thing we see is the ripple of fun that spreads over everything, like the golden network of a brook that flows in the sun. Hark how she speaks of a transitory illness (5th January 1861): "I have passed through many phases since I wrote last, including one whole day in bed, which I rather enjoyed; at least I felt very superior to the shivering wretches who had no excuse for being rolled into a ball and 'concentred all on self.' I could not make up my mind to get quite well for some few days."

Again, a mere scrap arranging trains for a visit (undated) closes with these words: "I feel a thirst for a talk with you of a strictly desultory kind." Again, in writing to "Lizzy,"[1] planning one of the many visits, she says: "Tell your Mother I will take the greatest possible care of you, and 'nourish you and cherish you, and give you plenty of castor oil.' This is taken from a ritual some little girls were heard saying over a marriage among their dolls." Later to Mrs Constable herself: "The sight of you would be a real joy. I am getting so 'old and stiff in the joints,' like Pope and Pagan in the *Pilgrim's Progress*, that very soon I shall not be worth coming to see. *Now* I am well worth it."

The letters addressed to the father of the family were naturally more often about her books. The following must, I think, be about the *Two Friends* (18th September 1862): "I have sent off half the last chapter of my book, and now a strange apathy and utter incompetency to finish it has come over me, joined with a disposition to frisk about the town, and take up any other thing, book or person. I ought to sit down to it for two or three good mornings, for the material is all ready. What curious laws the mind has, and what a silent resistance it sometimes makes!" 8th October 1862: "Your letter this morning had a magical effect upon me, for it made me set to and finish my book! the results of which you see. I am well pleased with my morning's work. I only know one thing, that it must end with the Cross. Without that, I could not have cared for the book or for anything in it."

Those on kindred subjects are wholly undated. "Composition of a sustained kind tires me greatly, even physically, from the rush and pressure of ideas it causes, while on the other hand reading even of a severe kind does not tire me at all but refreshes, and for all that concerns acquisition my mind seems fresh and keen." Again: "What a purist the dear man is about rhymes! And he

[1] Mrs Berkley.

never sends me the least bit of a compliment even when I ask for one, although Tasso tells us that the Vase of Admonition should always be sugared round the edges." Again: "Alan and I have got into the habit of living and working by the moment, acting on the principle of doing the best under existing circumstances, and then being content with ourselves, as Don Quixote was with his helmet, making up his mind it was a good one, and need not be improved."

It is to Mrs Constable she turns in depression: "Please do not keep the letter you had this morning. Sometimes it is a comfort to write to a friend as you would talk, without the sense of *litera scripta manet*, and it is one I shall occasionally claim with you." Again: "Remember that I am longing for some crumbs of comfort from somebody or other." And again: "These lovely September days seem full of beauty and *relenting* after the wet, cold, and disappointing summer, but I always love this season best, far best of any. It has a sense of repose and of fulfilment which extends even to the heart, and then, too, it brings a sense of gathering in and fruition, a return to things long left behind. I need such comfort."

And again the arrival of a new niece in her eldest brother's family is described in amusing terms: "The whole affair has been quite a little comedy to me. The boys have been highly displeased at its not being of their own sex, 'the more worthy gender,' and what makes it the more provoking is that the doctor, had he only known in time what their wishes were, might have brought them a boy, but now it cannot be changed. The little girls, on the contrary, have welcomed it, Dora in her own plaintive little way, and Marion, who is such a bright bold little damsel and turns everything into a song—indeed from her birth she has only had two fixed and dominant ideas, singing and kissing—has already improvised a 'Hush-a-by-Baby' over it. My mother has just gone to fetch the boys here for a few days, and I expect we shall have some remarks of exquisite *naïveté*."

In the spring of 1862 she sent a religious poem entitled "A Pastoral" to the *Scotsman*—which is one of her sweetest—and she writes on 31st March: "It makes me feel rather proud having written a Lenten Pastoral—just like Cardinal Wisewoman." Again, she is collecting for some charity: "I *am* so fond of money, a benevolent friend of mine here says she hears a great deal about knowledge being power, but for her part if she can only get love or money (or both) to work with, she wants nothing more."

Once she writes to Mrs Constable: "I have had such a lovely present from Miss Ingelow, a real, old-fashioned, Clarissa Harlowe, embroidered work-bag, her very own sole work and device. I am under a promise to send her a kettle-holder, a very humble affair, and now she says she intends to challenge our sister Christina, and put her through her paces as to hemming and sewing." And once to Lizzie: "I have learned three lovely songs with my dear Miss Camidge, but I won't tell you the names, because I wish to show off when you come. One cannot *always*, you know, act from the highest motives." And again to Archie: "Do you remember Lizzy's favourite joke about 'a coople o' dooks.' It is not yet extinct, but has assumed a sort of historic dignity." . . . "I enjoy taking a walk under the auspices of Alan Greenwell, Junior, a very agreeable and desultory youth of the 'Angel-may-care' (as opposed to the 'Devil-may-care') species."

Thus did the charming spirit of fun lead her along over what was often but a wearisome road. She had, moreover, a profound belief in what she called "moments," meaning by this the single perfect impression that cannot be recaptured, and yet may remain as a treasure in the memory for ever. Photography was at this date just being popularised, and was by her highly appreciated, as she caught at the idea of being able to seize and fix for ever a single point of time. We all remember the portentous solemnity of the old daguerreotypes, and over

and over again she must have been undeceived, and been ready to throw the little travesty across the room, but, though she admits that " after forty, the judicial severity of a photograph is a little trying," it is amusing, as well as a little pathetic, to note how she clings to the possibility of possessing a " moment " thus captured in the nick of time.

After one of her enchanting visits to Edinburgh, she writes to Mr Constable : " I feel greatly lost for want of one thing, and that is a likeness of my dear, dear Tommy. He must have one done for me, a humble shilling one to do for the present, the first opportunity he has. Some time I intend to have you and Lucy taken together, both in your hats (or both in your bonnets, which should it be ?) exactly as you stood there at the station when the train was starting. You never, both of you, looked so pleasant or so fair to my eyes and heart as just then. I am a great believer in *moments*, times which one wishes to make perpetual."

A year or two later she writes to the same kind friend : " I can entirely enter into your not wishing to break the party up. Oh, how often have I felt this even in a very small way, sitting round the fire, or lingering a little longer at the tea-table ; even if you move your chairs, something seems to go that is not to be wooed back again. How vexed I have sometimes been with those fidgety and kind people, who will insist upon *shoving* you about and making you more comfortable than you *can* be ! The spirit of delight is subtle and soon flies."

Through all her life, in spiritual as well as in earthly things, runs this conviction of the value of hasty glimpses of good or of beauty, even if they were never followed up. Depressed and uncertain health only too successfully pursued and hunted down the aspirations of her soaring spirit, and a " moment " was often all she could attain to. These were things to be safely snatched from surrounding blackness, brief blossoms to be taken exactly when offered, for if missed they are missed for ever. She

was very fond of a quotation about the human heart "winning heights which it is not competent to keep," and did not count such failure as moral inconsistency. Her character cannot be rightly understood unless we accept this precarious (and to most minds uncomfortable) position in which a half of her being maintained its unsteady balance, while the other half was almost strangely patient and plodding.

But all this is hardly "gossip," and there is no doubt that it is round Mrs Greenwell that the most characteristic stories centre, some of them very amusing, and some pathetic from their note of scarcely conscious harshness. Let us not be hard on the old lady. She was just, and even God-fearing in a reserved and old-fashioned way, and when you settle down with your only daughter to spend a comfortable, well-ordered old age, when you want to peer over your gold spectacles at the vagaries of the young people and say, "It was not so when *I* was young, my dear," and to pass at least a part of the evening at cards; when these are your ideals it is very disappointing to find that daughter a fairy changeling, having not one taste in common with yourself. However anxiously both sides may smooth over the difference, it is a rough fate which binds two souls to live together when the link between them is broken, or rather never existed.

Mrs M'Chesney, a really intimate friend, says: "Her mother never thoroughly approved of her life, her occupations, or her friends, and seemed to think it her duty to be always checking her impulses and keeping her straight. That Dora needed a little of this I am well aware, but it was hard, and she seemed always a little afraid of her. They certainly were fond of each other, but under a perpetual sense of difficulty, and the old lady could say very sarcastic things."

Mrs Greenwell is mentioned again and again in passing notes, and I think never without a sense of humour. It is as though a note in another key were struck, and by

a brisk turn must somehow or other be woven there and then into the flowing melody. Here are light touches given in a long letter to Archie, dated April 1867: "No events of moment have occurred since you left. My cold was very bad that night and I went to bed early. When comfortably settled there, the door was thrown wide open, and with a sort of pomp, 'Enter my mother in her nightgown'—as the old stage directions say of King Henry the IV—short scarlet dressing-jacket, and cap with whose stately proportions you must be familiar. She was supported by Bessy in a scarlet petticoat beginning exactly where my mother's dressing-gown ended, and the contrast of white and scarlet was so sharp and brilliant as seen in the glowing firelight, and the two tall figures so pleasing, I wished some artist had been there.

"The next day, for no special reason, but by way of something choice and festal, we dined in the drawing-room. Being quite by ourselves, there was no need to maintain discussion by weighty and incisive moral aphorisms, and the conversation was sweet to me, touching on many points, not even excluding the theological." . . . "Alan the younger has appeared on the scene for a few days since you left; he enquired after you with interest, and seemed in a lofty way to regret having missed seeing you. At night he concentred as in a focus the whole strength of his conversational powers on me, and, after some really very interesting talk about the Cumberland dialect with apt illustrations given, the conversation took a semi-fashionable, semi-sporting character, with the late Marquis of Hastings and a certain Lady Elizabeth as central figures. I was listening with devout attention when Margaret came in and stolidly laid down half a crown on my knee. 'Please, ma'am, mistress has sent this for you to give from her to Master Alan.' I should as soon have thought of offering such a testimonial to you, or to the Marquis of Hastings himself, but dear Alan received it and pocketed it with undisturbed

suavity." Again, in a letter of January 1868, we have these words: "Alan (the less) was speaking of you the other evening with majestic approval as a nice good fellow, and my mother (evidently with a high moral purpose) threw in such an alarming list of your mental attributes and lofty virtues, that I was quite glad to be able to assure Alan that you were a very lazy chap, and to tell him certain legends about you. These he took very pleasantly, and with obvious personal relief."

The difference of feeling about friends was one of the most trying issues between the mother and daughter. Mr Constable alone she approved, but not the rest of his family. Archie, in spite of commendation behind his back, was severely lectured, and the eldest daughter, Lizzie, was always shown that she was unwelcome. Her sister, Mrs Bruce, writes more than a generation later: "I wish I could remember with more accuracy, but the general impression left with me is that she was always saying unpleasant things to my sister, and openly anxious to get her out of the house. On one occasion, just before she left, Mrs Greenwell, who was by this time very old, began to cry. Lizzie thought she was feeling a little affectionately towards her at the close of her uncomfortable stay, so she went up to the big chair where the old lady always sat, and said something kind and caressing. But it was nothing of the kind, for she said drily, 'I'm just afraid your cab has forgotten to come for you, and there'll be a delay.' The visits were full of things like that."

Mr Constable himself was always a welcome guest at Durham. "My mother is enchanted at the prospect of a visit"—this begins an undated and most amusing letter—"and when I asked her just now what I should say to you on her account, says, 'Oh, say nothin' at all, for, depend upon it, he knows how pleased we are, so what's the use of troublin' him with hard spellin' in a letter?' Alan will be here, I am glad to say. He is not well, and is shortly going abroad with a couple o' dooks,

though not, alas, the original couple. I have much to hear and to tell, and we must improve the shining hours." This chronic disapprobation applying in a greater or less degree to all the rest of her friends, made them sink into the position she used to describe as " clandestine lovers," and with the brightness of a rarely noble soul she disperses the cloud of bitterness that was ready to gather round every visit, and to show the amusing side in vivid colours. To Archie, who had often suffered in silence, she writes : " We have Mr Knight here now. I find him delightful as a companion and friend. I don't know whether I can expect you to be sufficiently generous as to be glad to know that as a clandestine lover he has done better than you, at least he has escaped those severe declamations and visitations of censure. I do not expect, however, that the character will be fairly and completely filled, until I get your dearest mother here. I can hide her away so nicely in holes and corners when she is not wanted. She will help with me in everything all day long, and ' crack wi' me at e'en,' like Johnny in the beautiful old Scottish song."

See with what charming tolerance she accepts the limitations of her life, particularly with regard to the difficulties of paying visits or travelling : " My mother and I please ourselves by planning a little summer tour. We have a friend in the far north as good as she is bonny and as bonny as she is good, who married not long ago, and now she has a baby and all sorts of luxuries which we have already been too long in partaking of. (That sounds as if we were going to eat the poor baby.) Then we would come on and see you, and perhaps go a short way into the Highlands. I am going to believe in this, though we have already passed a winter in Florence and a summer at Baden-Baden, and made many other lovely excursions by the Celestial Railway of Fancy."

The old lady entered keenly into these plans as though they were seriously undertaken, and when she was happy she had curious little ways of testifying to her satis-

faction. "My mother is quite cheery, having to plan and preside over things she likes. On my return I found her in a most placid mood, with a florin laid beside her by way of a 'testimonial' to me, and a beautiful little box into which she had made a careful selection of Archie's goodies. I greatly felt the attention. Margaret and Bessie and Maggie had similar donations on a smaller scale." A few years later she begins to decline: "My mother keeps well, but is very much changed in looks, and in other ways too. Some friends who had not seen her for a year were greatly struck with her being so much paler, feebler, and *stiller*. There is very little and almost nothing of irritability now, yet her spirits on the whole are good."

Miss Ingelow writes describing her first visit: "She lived with her mother, a very striking mother, who had an almost Roman air of decision and energy, was very tall, dark, had a fine presence, and a certain protective air over the daughter, who was also tall, very slender, and had a gentle, slightly hesitating manner, and a soft, almost cooing voice." [1]

There was a very kind friend, a Miss Caroline Richardson, who, as Mrs Greenwell's health and powers began to fail, and she became ever more exacting, would come over from Newcastle and stay awhile, and relieve the unremitting strain. This lady bears noble testimony to the way our prophet stooped under the yoke, treating the attendance as a duty in no way to be shirked but to be joyfully fulfilled as strength was given. She writes: "So completely did she enter into a fellowship of suffering that it was easy to realise how, apart from any personal sorrows, the temper of her mind was moulded to the sadness which runs through all her later works. But the charming playfulness which turned aside every trifling vexation, made sunshine in the deepest gloom." [2]

I think one may say that she never allowed herself to complain, and even when she turned to her "beloved

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 133. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

Lucy " (Mrs Constable) for consolation, her laments are in general terms : " My life is in some respects such a strange and difficult one, and makes such a continual demand upon my strength and spirits, that I often feel unable (even when I have plenty of time) to whip myself up to writing a letter. I would rather sit resting over the fire or by the open window, as the day and hour may invite. But on the other hand I feel quite afraid of letting *any* good and cherished thing slip out of my life. Nay, I ardently desire and pray to deepen and strengthen, and as it were to intensify those (comparatively) few ties of affection which I have always felt to be real, intimate, and sustaining." [1]

A brighter view is given by Mr Tom Constable : " As Mrs Greenwell became more infirm, she could hardly bear her daughter out of her sight. Yet, when invitations (to dinner, etc.) came, she was almost always pressed to accept them. But when the time for actually going came, the old lady could not bear to lose her, and sometimes there would be a scene of this kind : ' Dora, I'll give you a shilling if you'll not go to that place this evening, but stop at home with me.' ' Oh dear no, Mother, I couldn't think of stopping away for a shilling. I'm asked to meet the Dean, and all sorts of fashionable people.' ' Well, eighteenpence then.' (The old lady had a good deal of humour.) ' No, no, Mother. I refuse to come to terms under anything less than half a crown.' And then a polite refusal would be sent, and Miss Greenwell would cheerfully settle down to read aloud some story from the *Quiver*, or a novel, or (more often latterly) hymns, or the Bible." [2]

Mrs Waite's account is much the same : " She loved to spend an evening now and then with my father (Canon Evans) to talk over books. Punctually at 9 o'clock there would be the announcement, ' Miss Greenwell's maid, if you please.' A message would be sent by my mother that she would come at 10 o'clock, and that they would

[1] Unpublished, undated letter.

[2] *Memoirs*, p. 162.

certainly see her home, but at half-past nine the ruthless summons would come again, 'Miss Greenwell's maid. And Mrs Greenwell says she *must* come.' She went, of course, but there was nothing to go for. The old lady was comfortably wrapped up by the fire, and sometimes her very first words were, 'I think, Dora, I'll go to bed. Would you ring the bell.' You must remember the daughter was nearer fifty than forty at this time, and her bright, free, impulsive spirit found the bondage almost intolerably galling. She loved liberty and generosity above all things in the world, and was fated to live with their opposites, yet I never heard one direct word of complaint; there used to be a moment's silence, and then she passed off the matter with a shrug and a smile. On one or two points only Dora got her own way. This curious old lady had a strange objection to Family Prayers and had never held them. But, when well settled in at Durham, Dora thought it right to have them, and proved inflexible. Many were the little notes despatched across the precincts, 'Dear Rosamond, Do run over and help me with Prayers. We get through more easily when you are there.'

"Mrs Greenwell withheld her most caustic speeches in the presence of a stranger, but I myself have heard her say, 'Prayers, Prayers? Whatever do we want with Prayers?' If only she would have been absent! but no, she sat by and snorted and fidgeted, and once I saw her suddenly snatch her purse from her pocket and count over the money openly, and say in a reflective tone of voice, 'Rabbits are two-and-nine the couple.' Oh, Dora's sensitive spirit suffered, and suffered, and went on suffering. Her health was very poor indeed, and yet I believe she minded this tyranny a great deal more, and sometimes indeed it was little short of anguish."

Such were some of the reminiscences given verbally by Mrs Waite when, in 1906, I cycled about England seeking to collect them, and once more I asked the unavailing question, How did this plant of heaven arise from such

a soil? After all, it was not the mother who was peculiar, it was the daughter, and how did she come to be so markedly religious, and that not in the ordinary way, but as one who has her life and breath and all her vital interest in the spiritual world? "Books," replied Mrs Waite incisively, "books and solitude; and her own instincts and thoughts and prayers. No one can overestimate how lonely she was. Her brothers were quite different. She tried to think Mr Alan was with her, and indeed he had something of her face, only handsomer, and he had her quick bright temperament and was very attractive. But as for religious principles—why, he was a Comtist or something of that sort when I knew them here, and never even went to Church." Rising, she searched in her desk, and brought out a treasured packet of a dozen letters to herself and placed them in my hands. They were overflowing with affection, but did not otherwise contain anything of moment, and I only gathered once more that her personality was greater than anything she wrote, and that so strong was her individualising tendency, her power of entering into the difficulties and aspirations of the single soul, that I could find some three or four good women here and there, who each one considered her position as that of the most intimate friend.

In the spring of 1868 Mrs Greenwell had a paralytic seizure, and, as is often the case with a truly strong and self-controlled nature, made, at any rate for the first few weeks, an admirable invalid. She lived nearly four years longer, and as her powers returned she resumed her sway, but there is an element of the deeply pathetic in observing how the spirits of her daughter involuntarily rose during the few months of absence of restraint. She could, as it were, "be herself," and deal directly with her three devoted servants, and with the world around her. Listen to the following letters addressed to Archie Constable, to whom she was never weary of confiding events and thoughts that were not of directly theological

interest. First comes, 24th March 1868: "You will grieve to learn that my mother has had a very serious paralytic stroke, and is quite helpless; free from pain, however, and so sweet and contented and gay, it is quite wonderful. Our doctor thinks she will rally as regards life, but what we fear is that she will not regain the use of her limbs—a serious prospect both to her and us. So far, we have every comfort and nothing else. It is a joy to be near her. The complete absence of irritability, and the continual presence of everything that is loving, considerate, and delightful—she seems, as it were, transfigured."

The next is a long one, dated 14th June, and one can feel overflowing spirits in every line: "I have not yet acknowledged your dear, delightful parcel, which contained *hours and hours* of happiness for me. The *Dramatis Personæ*[1] I take to whenever I have a few spare moments at night, and the goodies are the treasure of my existence. My mother is very angry with me for having appropriated them; but *she* has just had a third paper sent her by her dear Mr Barnes, besides having a decided, and now almost exclusive, preference for barley-sugar; so that yours live with me in the drawing-room, and are handed about to geniuses, saints, and beauties. Dear Archie! you must not be very long in coming again, or we shall all be getting a good deal beyond you in intellect and general range of subjects. I have made Franky a present of the *Morte d'Arthur*, and he and I have taken to suppers of quite orgiastic character. Many new features have come on since you were here. My mother drives out constantly, and has formed a virtuous attachment to our next-door neighbour, who carries her downstairs, and whom you will find established as a household word and fact. I can only describe him as 'Baxter.' I do not know whether he is descended from him of the *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, or allied with the lady of that name in the Irish song—'Miss Baxter, who re-

[1] R. Browning's Poems.

fused the Capting before he axed her,'—but he needs no derived lustre, being handiness, readiness, and zeal personified. Also having once lived at 'Ripley Castle' (wherever that may be), he sheds a courtly gleam over me, and Margaret and Bessy, and Bell, that sunken foundation-stone of our family edifice, whom you did not, I think, see, though her labours and sorrows you must have heard of." She goes on to propose meeting him at some lodging kept by "a wonderfully pretty and pleasant old lady," and ends her letter thus: "With her we might enjoy a fair share of domestic felicity, and good, long, talkative meals, without which any existence must be incomplete."

But these days of peace did not last long, and one of the few dated letters is a sorrowful one. 8th December 1868: "I wonder if you were thinking of me last night? I had a sense that we were present to one another in unchanging love. Dearest Lucy, things have been trying and harassing to me—perhaps I should say hurting—to a degree you can hardly conceive; but I consider all this is in a great degree of the past, now that my kind, good brother is coming to live with us. You can scarcely believe, my dear Lucy, how little good one's kindest friends *outside* can do in the way of lifting a continual strain like this. When they come in I have to exert myself to entertain them. Now a kind friend *within* is a part of all, expects no amusing, and is a safety-valve for one's inevitable griefs and discontents, and gives that relief which is one of Heaven's best balms for care and sorrow. It is wonderful what the human heart can go through when it has some one thing it really delights in to turn to as a green spot for however short a time. A beloved being is best of all, but even a favourite and congenial occupation will do a great deal."

Those exceedingly kind friends, the Constables, outdid themselves in beneficence, for they invited not only their dear friend but her mother as well to spend Christmas and the New Year with them. The plan was carried

out, and proved the greatest possible success, the invalid recovering powers of movement, and health, and equanimity, in a wonderful fashion. Archie was away, and it is in capital spirits that his friend writes to him, dating her letter from his own home, 2nd January 1869: "Lizzy is looking so sweet and pretty, and indeed they are *all* very pretty, beginning with papa, and only encountering one temporary check when we get as low down as Alec, who is less so than he was last year. I cannot tell you how happy we are here! It is exquisite happiness to me to see my beloved friends, your father and mother, so appreciated and loved as they are now by my mother. Although she appears pretty well and is very cheerful, her strength and spirits have been greatly shaken by her late serious attack. She needed a stimulus such as change gives, and she has that here, joined with all that can cheer and solace. Oh, my dear Archie, what a boon it is for our hearts and souls to breathe habitually a *climate* such as that of this house, where everything good and lovely and to be desired seems not only possible but natural, and the thing that is nearest to hand; 'it makes the Bible easier reading,' to quote a saying I heard not long ago of a poor half-witted girl who asked if the Bible was the same always, because it was so much easier to read in some houses than in others. I seem to love your mother more and more."

Pleasant and even beautiful gossip as all this may be, we must close the account of it for awhile and turn to graver matters. But let me end with a little lyric that is one of the very few quite finished and rounded-off writings that ever came from her pen. It has its inspiration, we know, from the happy home in Edinburgh.

Two birds within one nest;
Two hearts within one breast;
Two spirits in one fair
Firm league of love and prayer
Together bound for aye, together blest.

An ear that waits to catch
A hand upon the latch,
A step that hastens its sweet rest to win ;
  A world of care without,
  A world of strife shut out,
A world of love shut in.

"Home," *Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER VII

## HER PROSE WORKS

A LIFE lived in this world may possess a charm and a perfume which no written words can reproduce. It may be like the elusive scent of the apple blossom, or like a knot of the red buds and creamy petals showing like an exquisite enamel against the cloudless blue of the sky, but, alas, it is all too soon gone, and only the memory is left. Such are many sweet and fragrant lives, but those that belong to the goodly fellowship of the prophets must leave more behind them. Just as the bees of April and May are busy in diving into the innermost structure of the blossom and do not cease their work till the fruit is "set," and we may be sure of apples in September, so do visitations come and go, so does change succeed change, and long after the petals lie scattered on the grass we have a store of sound ripe fruit laid by.

Leaving all metaphor we may say that no one can be ranked among the prophets unless he leaves behind him something persistent, something that remains as a heritage for people yet unborn. It may be a series of actions either initiated or completed, such as those of Elijah, Luther, or Livingstone; but generally it is by leaving writings which shall prove a fount of inspiration to hundreds more in all ages to come, as we see in Isaiah, St Augustine, or John Bunyan. It is to this class that Dora Greenwell belongs. There stand her books on my shelf, a slender row scarcely over a dozen, and except the two which contain her verses which have been lately republished, they are rather a dim and unattractive looking set. In chapters 14 to 18 I will endeavour to sum up the substance of her teaching, but now we will

dwell on the form of it, and the estimate others made of its value, for that form is curiously elusive, and when I lend one of these books to a friend, the comment is always the same that it has no definite beginning or end, and therefore that it is hard to grasp the aim of the whole.

It is rather sad to have to admit so serious a failing in a writer, for it implies a lack of concentration and of power to keep an object ever steadfastly in view, and yet when we see that the prophesy of Obadiah resembles this somewhat in structure, and that the story of Jonah is so unfinished as to leave us saying eagerly, " Well, and what next ? " we see that we must be content. Let us therefore make a list of her books in chronological order, and see how they were received.

1860. *The Patience of Hope.* This little book attracted attention at once, and it speaks very well for the readers of that day that it did so. Evidently they were willing to dig for their gold, and did not need to see it lie glittering on the surface before they would stoop to pick it up, for this is rather a dingy little brown affair, and the print of the Notes (which are many) is almost too small to be read. The first edition lies before me, with the " red leafing " the author so much admired ; it is dedicated to J. E. B. (who is St Josephine) and contains a hundred and eight most delicately printed little pages, for Mr Constable was an expert in the details of his art. If ever a book had no beginning and no end it is this one, and yet the production of it seems to have been the greatest event in her literary life, and many years later she wrote to Prof. Knight, " I always feel that it was in *The Patience of Hope* that I had my say out." And again, " It contains the thing I was born to do in the way of writing." Such was her own opinion.

The welcome given was wonderful. There is one letter about this, so interesting that it must be copied nearly in full. It is addressed to her mother, written

from Edinburgh, and dated 30th October 1860, showing her book had been four months before the public.

" Dearest Mother,—Before I begin, I must beg that this letter may only be shown to Alan, or I should not send it. What I have to say may look like vanity, and indeed perhaps it is not wholly free from it, only I think you will be really gratified in hearing it. It is so good that I can scarcely believe it myself." (She tells at length of her meeting with a Mr Taylor-Innes, whom she describes as " small and dark, gentle of speech, and very thoughtful," and goes on to say) " we soon drew together and he began at once to tell me about *The Patience of Hope*, and what it had been to himself and to so many of his friends, all young men, and of the highest intellectual promise ; it is on this class he says that the book has such a hold. I cannot remember their names nor even the particulars of each, there were so many, but nearly all, I think, had been students under the late Sir William Hamilton, the Professor of Moral Science here, whose lectures, Mr Innes said, tended to develope the thinking faculties in the most extraordinary manner. One of them had written to Mr Innes from the Highlands, saying that he had no books with him but the Bible and *The Patience of Hope*, and needed no other ; that, indeed, he knew the *Patience* by heart but chose to have it with him because he could not look at the outside without great and comforting thoughts coming into his mind. Another, a first-rate man, had been to Glasgow and lived much with earnest thinkers there, especially with a lady of uncommon mind who had gained great intellectual influence over him, and he came back in an enquiring and unsettled state, but is now completely established in the faith, to which Mr Innes thinks the book has greatly tended ; he is a medical man, and now in the great Infirmary in Birmingham, which he makes a field for labours of faith and love. Another friend whom Mr Innes only saw for a moment at the beginning of the New Year, and had just time to give him the book (and

even forgot that he had done so), has written to him lately to say that through it his path in life has grown so much clearer that it has grown sweeter too. Another came back for seven copies to give to his friends; and all these, Mr Innes says, are highly intellectual men, still young, and likely to be centres of influence to others. I cannot remember half, and indeed it is just as well! He says every sentence in it has 'a life of its own, and was able to raise up a separate thought.' He said it was 'astonishing, especially in the richness of the style, and none of his friends would believe it was written by a woman.' All this may look rather highflown written, but from him it did not sound at all like flattery, only like enthusiasm and real interest." This was a most encouraging incident.

In 1862 a new edition was brought out by a publisher in Boston, U.S.A., with a very discerning Introduction by the Quaker poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, and it found considerable acceptance on the other side of the Atlantic. Mr Whittier began boldly indeed, for he places this vague little book with its wholly unknown author in a line with the writings of Thomas à Kempis, Fénélon, Tauler, and John Woolman, and that "not because reason altogether assents," but because "they have in common a certain sweetness and savour of life" that has endeared them to the very heart of Christendom. He dwells on the book with ardour and yet with discrimination, indicating his own "doubtful pause and hesitancy over some portions" of it.

He says, "It is perhaps addressed too exclusively to those who minister in the inner sanctuary to be entirely intelligible to the vaster number who wait in the outer courts; it overlooks, perhaps, too much the solidarity and oneness of humanity, but all who read it will feel its earnestness, and confess to the singular beauty of its style, the strong steady march of its argument, and the wide and varied learning which illustrates it." "It is a lofty plea for patience, trust, hope, and holy confidence,

as seen in the light of actual Christian experience." Where the good man found " the steady march of argument " I cannot think, but all the rest is quite true. He raises, and then enthusiastically quells, the objection that where the attention is strongly drawn to the world within, human compassion may suffer. I hope that later he got to know about her jail-birds and her idiots.

1861. *A Present Heaven.* In subsequent editions the title was, at her own desire, changed to *The Covenant of Life and Peace.* Here is a truly beautiful book, and it promises great things, for it is the only one of her works which has a table of contents, and puts forward a plan. We are told we shall hear about the four different ways in which the Gospel of Christ is received among men. First, *Partially*, in timidity and ignorance, and often overlaid with superstition; next, *Historically*, when all the emphasis is laid on past facts which cannot be altered; thirdly, *Prophetically*, when we throw the whole weight of blessing into the future, and count the present but " the vale of tears " we must pass through to reach it; and lastly, *Implicitly*, exhibiting the wealth that is indeed ours here and now, and which has in it the continuity of Eternal Life. This is a good scheme of structure but it is carried out with a sort of mist round it, so that the reader " loses the place," and has to turn back to the chapter-heading to find which division he is studying. But for all this the book is a gem, and has in it passages of sustained grandeur, such as are lacking in the earlier volume.

I think I cannot do better here than give a long quotation, which shows not only the nobleness of her thought but the solemn beauty of her wording. So great a favourite was this book with my parents, so glad were they of the ringing confidence of some of its expressions, that at the age of sixteen or seventeen I learned this paragraph by heart, and at their request would repeat it on a Sunday evening, just as one might repeat a piece of sacred poetry.

" There is an attractive power of the world, a seductive weakness of the flesh, a deep-seated malignity of the devil, working through each of these to our ruin. The world has something to show, the flesh something to crave, the devil something to give and more to promise ; these are all strong men armed, having mouths speaking, asking, boasting great things, and to all of these, their allurements, solicitations, and temptations, the coming in of Him who is stronger than they, has but one thing to oppose, a weapon, single yet mighty and effectual to the pulling down of all their strongholds—Faith, intimate, adhesive, and reliant on an ever-living and ever-present God. Baal's prophets are and always have been many, but this one prophet and witness of the Lord, even though like Elijah it remain alone, is strong enough to withstand and to overcome them all ; for this is the Victory which overcometh the world, the world of sense without, the world of sin within us, even our Faith in Him who hath overcome all things for and in His people. The world is so much to us only because God is so little ; let Faith but once restore the soul to its true centre, so that looking at divine realities through a just medium we may see them in their true and unspeakable importance, and the power of outward things is weakened and their over-weening charm dissolved—the enchanter's wand is broken and his spell read backward."

Hundreds, perhaps thousands of sermons have been preached and written on the power of faith to overcome the world, but has the subject ever been couched in words more noble ? That is because it comes from one inspired from Heaven to deal with a certain class of subjects, to my mind inimitably. " There is none like her, none."

1863. *Two Friends.* This book has a real systematic beginning, though it has no end, but just stops in the middle of a conversation. Here, without reserve, is to me the beloved book. I was, as it were, brought up upon *A Present Heaven* and stood in awe of it, and one

summer's day seeing this was by the same author, I took it, in passing, out of my mother's bookcase, and went out into the garden. It was the time of early youth, and all the world was beginning to open out round me in joyous expectancy, and yet was kept under by a steady repression from without. I went down to my favourite walk, a measured half-furlong in the orchard, and as I read I found there a great and prevailing sympathy. Subjects that no one else had ever touched upon by words spoken or written, and my heart went out in wonder and gratitude to the one person in the world who seemed to understand its well-hidden secrets, and to deal tenderly with them. There is so much to say that I must defer the discussion, and I am glad to think that of all her prose works, this is the only one still in print.

1866. *Essays.* A neat business-like little book containing five articles, mostly reprinted from the *North British Review.* " Our Single Women " is excellent for the date. Its opinions have, of course, by now been given so many times over that to us it appears obvious and even timid, but at the time it was written it was all new, and, being bright and spirited, it was by some considered " rather daring." Another essay, " Hardened in Good," is a pathetic record of her experiences among paupers and criminals, and, though rambling, is sympathetic and full of encouragement. " Prayer " is more of a reversion to her strange, unfinished, tentative ways, and yet the division into, " Why Prayer does good," and " Why Prayer does not do more good than it does," is original and effective ; among the hundreds of treatises on this difficult subject, her words can hold a place. " Popular Religious Literature " is very clever. It is a criticism of tracts with highly improbable stories in them, of sermons on heaven, and similar speculations which were then catching the public attention, and which she disposes of in smart and cheerful words. " Christianos ad Leones " is better still, and shows in delicate and amusing terms that " the scrupulously moral and delight-

ful atheist," whose portrait " is touched and retouched in such brilliant colours that it looks almost as splendid as a bird of Paradise in an old-fashioned album," is unlike anything in actual life. It appears that he was a favourite just then with the public, and was used as a foil to the sour-faced Christian who presses ugly tracts on most unwilling recipients.

It is charming to see with what incisive certainty, what genuine enthusiasm she defends the caricatured and heavily-belaboured Christian. There is no apology, no hesitation, but she throws down the glove boldly in face of the sun. " I venture to say that where in England there is one person to be found devoted to social amelioration from purely philanthropic and moral considerations, you may find a thousand devoted to it from religious motives ; and there is not a town, however corrupt, nor a village, however obscure, that does not hold within it persons living in the mere simplicity of the Christian faith, lives as expansive, as self-forgetting, as sublime, as ever philosopher has aimed at." Terse and positive, we can hardly believe that some of the pages of this book are written by our prophet, for she knows her own mind as clearly as any one could wish ; it is most refreshing.

1867. *Lacordaire.* This is the biography of a Dominican friar who had died barely six years previously, after a life of profound humility and considerable usefulness, and is very beautifully written. As from the nature of the subject it has both a beginning and an end, some have considered it her masterpiece, but I think there are others in the world could have written this, whereas no one else could have written *Two Friends* or *Colloquia Crucis.*

1871. *Colloquia Crucis.* This is a sequel to *Two Friends,* and so has something of a beginning, but it has no close, and allows you to turn over the page, hoping that Philip is going to say something more. The thread connecting the topics of conversation is, if possible, even slighter than in the previous volume, and yet it is

beautiful, and, as I said before, I don't think any one else could have written it, neither St Francois de Sales, nor Archbishop Leighton, nor the poet Cowper.

1875. *Liber Humanitatis.* A bigger, more imposing volume, containing eight articles. I need hardly go through them, though, like the rest of the thinking world in the early seventies, she is reading "Mill on everything," and is deep in Utilitarianism and all else. Each essay is wonderfully able, and yet each bears that curiously unfinished look that marks her hand; it is as if she *did not wish* to bring her readers to her own point of view, but rather to give them some basis of judgment from which to draw conclusions of their own. The article on the "Relation between Poetry and Christianity" is suggestive and beautiful, and I think no one but herself could have written it.

1876. *A Basket of Summer Fruit.* Those who love our prophet will heave a sigh of relief that this, her very last work, is so clear, so decided, so "faithful unto death." The folk-lore, the allegories, and the cloudy old legends are all left behind, and with humble but unfaltering steps she "follows the footsteps of the flock" pressing closer and ever closer to the Good Shepherd Himself, till, as she draws near Him, she can hardly find an inch of ground where their impress is not clear. The dedication is "To the American Evangelists," and the first words are a sweet little poem, beginning "Come hither, friends, and eat!" There are eight little essays, and she, Dora Greenwell, is lost, obliterated, gone, hidden behind the saints of her choice. And how many they are! There is Alexander Knox who knew John Wesley in his youth; and St Bernard, and M. de Saci of Port Royal; and plenty of sturdy old Luther, and Richard Baxter, and that most pathetic couple, S. T. Coleridge and W. Cowper; and Father Faber, and Madame Swetchine, and David Brainerd. Time and space are ignored, there are no dates given and no environment. We are in a world of pure spirit where

there is " a silence round my Lord and me." Madame Guyon has a whole chapter to herself, and then it goes on again with Whitfield and Archbishop Leighton, and long and most interesting extracts from Isaac Pennington, the Quaker, and a good many others. The chapter entitled, " Of the Joy experienced by certain Believers in the near Approach of Death," is not only consolatory, but is profoundly touching, as though she felt the shadow drawing near to herself, and would by contact " strengthen her hand in God."

Here we must leave her. She published fifteen times in all, but only three are now to be had, the two volumes of poems already mentioned, and her beautiful "conversation with herself" which she called *Two Friends.*

" Grief waits for Love. She turns
To that kind voice, nor will the strangers hear,
Upon her worn and wasted cheek she yearns
To feel Love's burning tear.

Love seeks out Grief. He knows
No lips save His in fondest ministering,
From out her rankling wound, ere yet it close,
Can draw the deadly sting.

He fain unto His breast
Would draw her aching brow ; uncomforted
He knoweth she hath dwelt in long unrest,
She may not die unwed.

Hear, Earth and Heaven, their vow ;
Whom God hath joined in one let none divide.
Rejoice, O Heaven ! be joyful Earth ! for now
The Bridegroom meets the Bride."

*From* " The Marriage Supper," *Carmina Crucis.*

## CHAPTER VIII

## HER STYLE AND METHOD OF WRITING

WHAT is style? It is not truth, it is not insight, it is not sympathy, it is not even beauty, it is something added to these good things by the medium of the mind through which they pass. It is the purely subjective side of the matter in hand, and betrays at once whether the mind which holds us in the one-sided conversation of a book is interesting, refined, learned, and sympathetic, or whether it lacks these qualities. "Le style, c'est l'homme," is a true word. We all know how the tones of the voice affect us; how some people may relate a stirring incident and make it all seem commonplace and dull, while others can inspire small details with a living interest, and this subtle distinction becomes of incalculable importance on the printed page. Just as the eye of the artist is strongly selective, and, while keeping true to nature, holds some details in the background and emphasises others; just as by this intuitive and scarcely conscious process he lifts things out of the multiplicity we see around us and fastens them down into the subtle and peerless unity of Art, so does the master of words manipulate them and produce style. The young are exuberant, and this is far better than being pallid and thin, for it is easier work to prune a hedge than it is to encourage it to grow in its bare intervals.

Listen to the advice, the enchanting advice, given by Robert Louis Stevenson to Edmund Gosse: "One purple word is already much; three—a whole phrase—is inadmissable. Wed yourself to a clean austerity; that is your force. Wear a linen ephod, splendidly candid." We cannot, I fear, say that our author is either terse

or lucid, but for all this there is style. The truth is common property, but she adds something of herself to it as she gives it out to the world. Modest and even deprecating as she always was about her prose works, in later years she seemed conscious that she possessed this good gift, for on 2nd March 1870 she writes to Prof. Knight: "I have thought a great deal of what I said to you about style and its extraordinary importance. It is the final stamp in writing, answering to that indefinable finish and tone which, in personal appearance and manner, sets the mark of distinction on the possessor. I do not know how style is acquired; it seems to come to one sometimes as the last thing, to crown all."

Such "distinction" is indeed hers; she can be loose and rambling and dim without being slipshod, unfinished without for a moment implying she is ignorant, and her extraordinary hesitations suggest a philosophic balance rather than weakness; strong, but never rough, sweet but not sentimental, profound but not obscure, world-embracing but not shallow, confiding, while observing the limits of perfect reverence. Pages more might be spent on analysing this pure and lofty spirit, and she would come out whole and entire from the most stringent tests. It is (at any rate for me) no use to go to greater lengths of appreciation, so here I will close.

Her actual method of writing was by no means so satisfactory. I have verbal reminiscences given me in 1906 by old Canon Greenwell of Durham, and written down at the time. He said: "Those were just the years when young Huxley was speaking, and, though I did not agree with him, I went again and again to hear him as an intellectual treat without parallel. Cool, collected, and cogent, to the rest of us young men he seemed the ablest and most convincing speaker we had ever heard. I got to know him, and one day I asked him what element it was in his mind that gave him such a power

of conviction? or rather to what did he himself attribute his success? Most earnestly he assured me that his mental powers were not above the average, and that he owed his influence to one thing alone, and that was that he never spoke on a subject of the truth of which he was not absolutely convinced; he said he looked objections in the face, invited criticism from friends, allowed no point of dimness or hesitation in what he wanted to say, and then 'went at it' with all the force of his will, determined to get exactly the same thought into the mind of his audience. He would admit no superiority but that of certainty, and in the main I believe he was right.

"Now my sister's books," continued the old man mournfully, "were an embodiment of all that is the opposite of this. She had thoughts, now and then, some very fine thoughts that might have helped others, but they were loose and disconnected, and they had no definite aim that any one could see. Her manner of writing was very strange, for it was always in a kind of anxious haste. She never asked advice, she never invited criticism, never even put by a manuscript for three months and revised it herself. No, she just wrote a piece all on one impulse exactly as one might write a letter to a friend, and just as little did she think of improving it afterwards. What she had written, she had written, and beyond the small verbal corrections necessary, she would take no more trouble. It was the merest thinking aloud, unfinished, self-contradictory, and asking questions never answered, and I believe myself that this was in great part, if not wholly, due to her lack of any sort of educational discipline. I remember I read one book (I forget which) and said, 'Dora, I cannot see your aim. What is it you want to tell people? You seem to be in earnest, but what is the conclusion? You roll your subject over and over, and then you stop. I don't believe you know yourself what you want to teach!' She only smiled a

little sadly and said, 'Perhaps I don't,' and I think that was true."

Now in drawing this vivid contrast between Prof. Huxley and his sister, I do not think Canon Greenwell was quite fair. A scientific theory, capable of discussion, of argument, often also of ocular demonstration, is a thing capable of proof or disproof, and Huxley handled his tools so admirably that he produced complete intellectual conviction both in himself and in his audience. But to deal with the clear-cut field of scientific thought is a very different matter to dealing with Religion, which has for its basis not the intellect only, but the whole nature of man. That there is a rational side is indisputable, but this is only a part, and just when you are getting on well and beginning to count on a victory, the desires may start up with "But I don't want that," or the will may assert itself with "But I won't," and the whole fabric falls to the ground. Further, as it is not on the rational side of Religion, but on the emotional and volitional side that our prophet is at home, it is not much wonder the total is incomplete and at times self-contradictory. The manner in which the thoughts are strung together I do not for a moment defend, and believe with her brother that this is due "to the lack of educational discipline."

The secret of her great attractiveness lies just here. Her sympathy with human nature as it stands is so keen, that even while she is forced to condemn here and there, sympathy and humour both run alongside and suggest plenty of excuses. The animal nature we inherit is full of rebellions, desires, and affections. It cannot in itself be blameworthy, for we found it there ready-made when our individual spark of life was kindled, and we cannot be held responsible for its existence. The objects that surround us are constantly appealing to us as "good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and to be desired to make us wise," and the animal instinct is to stand and look, then take and eat, and then give to others.

Conscience is now born within, and there is a perpetual strife, well described by St Paul and others. The only solution of the life-long conflict is to be found in the coming of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Then at last the will is set really free, the conscience becomes the listening ear and controlling voice, love is awakened, and all the desires and ambitions are lifted to a higher plane. The strife is stilled and there is peace, peace.

I may seem to have wandered miles away from Dora Greenwell, and yet these thoughts, not fully recognised or expressed, seem to lie in the background of her mind. A sense of ineradicable defect is the burden against which she is always struggling, and had science in these directions been a little more advanced, she might have been greatly encouraged. Her sympathy with the mass of our racial instincts and endeavours is clear, and indeed at times cries out aloud at the hard fate assigned to it. And yet the beauty of her message is that beneath a process which somehow appears to her to be unfair, her soul pierces through to the positive. It is as though she were speaking against a clamour of voices, and calling to us, "Come here, come and see for yourself! There is a real force at work here. The magnet really draws the steel from the mass of dust, the steam really lifts the heavy piston, the words that to us seemed empty, are proved true. Praise God, praise God! We are on the right track. We have laid hold of the end of a powerful salvation, a regenerative force, which will bring us to the glory of a perfect life."

These metaphors are not her own, nor is any one of the sentences here given, and yet I believe you have here the key to her writings, from the dim words of *The Patience of Hope* to the triumphant certainties of the *Basket of Summer Fruit*, and it is this conviction running through her pages that gives the touch of immortality to her works. Never distinctly formulated, ever there in potent, formative life, it surely belongs more to *herself*

than to the matter that is at the moment engaging her conscious attention.

Let us now turn to another subject, and that is her love for Latin titles. We have four books, *Carmina Crucis*, *Colloquia Crucis*, *Liber Humanitatis*, and *Camera Obscura;* we have one essay, "Christianos ad Leones," and out of the thirty-three poems that constitute the volume of *Carmina Crucis*, ten have Latin names; there are a few also in the *Selected Poems*. We have already heard how she began systematically to learn Latin in 1860, with the schoolboy Tom Constable as her teacher, and how together they pored over "Balbus building the wall," and "Caius beholding the great snake's great body," but her feeling outran her knowledge altogether. In March 1863 she writes to Prof. Knight: "My fondness for Latin titles may seem somewhat fanciful, but it is connected with a peculiar hold which Latin, for some inexplicable reason, always exerts on my imagination. The sight of a sentence in the delectus, or a chance quotation in a book, will fasten itself upon my mind, and grow into a form having, perhaps, no obvious connection with the words I saw." [1]

This last half sentence I do not understand, but the rest of this quotation expresses a fact with which many of us are familiar. A little knowledge is of course needed, but only a very little, nothing that can in the least degree be called scholarship, when there comes to us a strange conviction that in the direction of language we have passed through mere sound and form to the thing itself. Perhaps we are with some toil and pain reading the first book of the Æneid, when, amid the difficult rules of grammar and the tiresome misplacement of the words, that magnificent storm breaks upon us; the winds rush and roar through the lines, the mighty waves come rolling in, black night settles down, "the poles thunder, and the sky glitters with frequent fires." This is not a description merely, this is bed-rock;

[1] *Memoirs.*

we gloat over the very look of the words, for they seem to us to be the very things of which they speak, and English to be only a clumsy and long-winded translation. It was, I think, this power in the stern king of tongues that she felt to an extraordinary degree. As for grammar, it was but a trifle, and she wished to twist it to her desires.

The book on which she spent far more time and effort than any other, she wished to call "Carmina in Via Crucis"; Mr Constable said he would not print such a sentence, so she changed it to "Carmina Via Crucis," and to this she clung obstinately until a man who is described as an "elegant scholar" assured her gravely that "such a use of the ablative was inadmissible." So at last she relapsed on the present title of two words, adding rather peevishly, "But then that isn't what I mean!"

The Latin titles are but an adjunct, a fancy, and though she quotes a little French, German, and Italian, it is only a few words of each at a time, and it is English, ordinary English, which in her hands acquires a quality we might call "saintliness," so pure and lofty is her use of it. The words reveal more of her inmost soul than she intends to reveal, and surely this is a noble quality in their use.

### Noah's Ark

From the tight-packed box
  O'er the carpet spread,
See what peaceful flocks
  In the firelight red,
Wander, from rude shocks
  Duly shepherded.

Now does childish play
  That sweet tale rehearse,
Told by Prophet grey,
  Sung in Sybil's verse,
Of a Coming Day,
  Of a vanquished curse.

See the Cow and Bear
  Together dwell and feed,
Ox and Lion there
  In sweet peace agreed ;
Wolf and Lamb one pasture share,
  And a little Child shall lead.

*Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER IX

## VARIOUS INCIDENTS

Let us now revert to the external events of the life of our author, and we will begin with the year 1868, when she stood at the zenith of her powers. Aristotle's famous definition of Happiness is that it consists in "the activity of the soul according to virtue," and if that were all she ought to have been boundlessly happy, for her soul was continuously active, and that along the highest possible lines. But I am afraid the old philosopher adds one more condition, "in a life which is complete," and hers was very incomplete. To an observant new-comer she never gave the impression of being at rest and happy but rather of one who is trying strongly and cheerfully to mitigate some of the inevitable sorrow of life.

Miss Jean Ingelow saw her only once at Durham, but says she lived "in a shaded world," and had a kind of subdued restlessness about her, as though the small circle of events in which she lived from day to day had in them experiences too trifling to suit her ardent spirit. "The clean, grass-grown street, the solid quiet house, the old Cathedral calm, the formal routine of visits which were all parts of her life, had a certain fascination for a looker-on; yet she could not but chide them, for they meant rest and withdrawal, and she felt a need for expansion, a sacred craving to do more for others, and to be more to them." [1]

Yet if the patience was enforced it was wonderfully perfect, for no definite word of complaint escaped her, and with heartfelt thankfulness she sought out and made the most of every source of pleasure that lay within her

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 134.

reach. Yet the lack of scope remained. Like some poor beaver in an iron cage whose teeth are strong enough to fell trees, and who is given no wood on which to use them, but who feels them grow and grow in his own despite till the unceasing pain ends in his weakness and death, even so would her soul have perpetually hurt itself and wasted away had it not been for that noble organisation we call the Post.

There was always Professor Knight to write to about the innumerable perplexities which arose from her wide and varied reading, and, better still, there were always the Constables standing like a blaze of light on the far horizon, and they could share in the events of daily life, and be loved and cherished to her heart's content. As for the annual visit to Edinburgh, that was something to live for the whole year round, half in memory, and half in anticipation.

On one of these visits she had the very real pleasure of spending an evening with the famous preacher, Dr Guthrie. A kind friend, Miss Jean Watson, is the chronicler. " It was a memorable evening for those who were privileged to be there. The conversation turned on Scottish theology; Miss Greenwell asked questions, and the Doctor answered, explained, and illustrated. I don't know who most excelled, the answerer or the questioner. I never saw Dr Guthrie appear to such advantage, and Miss Greenwell with her grand mind sat like a little child at his feet; for she felt he knew about matters that were strange to her. On the one side there was no dogmatising, on the other no cavilling. At one time when the subject turned on our Lord and His sufferings I saw the tears on her cheeks. . . . When we left and walked home in the beautiful summer evening Miss Greenwell spoke little; she seemed deep in thought. At last she said, 'How priviledged you are to know and sit under the ministry of such a man! I don't think that I ever before spent such an evening.' " [1] Some time

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 139.

afterward Dr Guthrie too mentioned that meeting, the good man spoke of her as "a true genius, humble, teachable, childlike." From an incident such as this we can see that ecclesiastical boundaries were nothing to her soul; not for an instant did she stop to consider them, for they did not exist for her. She recognised "the true episcopacy of the spirit" wherever she found it, and honoured it with an unreserved honour.

Just about this time she published her essay on "Our Single Women," and while Durham society was blind and deaf to her nobler writings, it caught eagerly at this, as at something tangible to be discussed and to shake one's head over at the tea-table, something on which everybody could "have an opinion." It appears that on the whole the essay was declared to be advanced, and rather "dangerous to the course of society," which the good ladies seemed to take for granted was all that could possibly be desired.

At this point I may bring in the verbal recollections of the late Mrs Shields of Western Lodge, Durham: "Well, you see I had just come as a young bride to Durham, and I found people rather afraid of Miss Greenwell, because she said such unexpected things. In those days, my dear, we were all very bashful, and very correct; we never talked about marriage, it wasn't considered quite modest, but Miss Greenwell did, openly. She told once how a good servant of hers had married an idle sort of man, and when asked why she had done so, replied, 'Well, ma'am, you see even a *bad* husband's *a kind of shelter*.' Oh, how she laughed! But what I wanted to tell you was this. One of the first times I heard her talk was at an afternoon tea; all ladies, and I was sitting there next her, very shy, and she was very kind and attentive. Well, the talk turned on an article she had published about single women, and what they ought to do in the world, and some there disliked it very much. But she only sat and smiled. At last somebody said, 'I suppose the next step is, Miss Green-

well, that you will be advertising for a husband?' It was very rude, my dear, exceedingly rude, and we all looked at poor Miss Greenwell expecting her to be very angry or blushing and covered with shame. Not a bit of it. What do you think she did? I can see her now; she had on a dark purple silk dress and a lace cap, and she just leaned back in her chair and said slowly and thoughtfully, 'Well, I have looked pretty well all over Durham, and I don't see one man I should care to marry—except perhaps that handsome young John Shields, who has lately come.' That's what she said, my dear, and with *me*, his young wife, sitting there close beside her! In these days the young people do say such extraordinary things that one might think little of it—laughed at one minute and forgotten the next—but in *those* days, oh, I can't tell you the effect. People were so shocked, and it was all over Durham. But *she* didn't care, and all the little gossiping trifles were nothing to her. I never knew her really well, but I always felt she was 'great,' not the least conceited, you know, but too big in all her plans and ways to suit the rest of us, too great for her surroundings."

This little picture gives, I fear, but too true a representation of how the eagle fared among the barn-door fowls, and hers was not only a wonderful mind, but surely also a wonderful will that amid surroundings so destitute of mental inspiration could maintain its noble flight toward the empyrean. The little shafts of gossip, and the little blows of feeble envy, fell off her heart as though they were not, and she was kind and courteous to all her neighbours, though with a sort of aloofness of spirit as of one whose main business was elsewhere. In Edinburgh she found congenial society, and was always happy there, though her mother's failing health made the visits very short. Her steady friend Tom Constable writes: "Never did I meet so delightful a talker. I have had many a long talk with her as a boy, as a youth, as a man, at all of which times I was interested in

entirely different things; but I always found a ready response, whatever the subject was. My mother and I were much amused by her parting remark after a visit, 'Oh, Lucy, there is only one thing that I am sorry about—that we haven't *talked more*.' Our impression was one of brilliant, delightful, almost unbroken talk from her." [1] That was how the non-understanding and misunderstanding atmosphere of her home reacted upon her.

Mrs Greenwell recovered in a fair measure from the paralytic seizure of 1868, and regained her tyranny, but she soon sank again, and on the 23rd September 1871, she died. As the fine old lady sat there day after day, again made docile by weakness, her daughter's heart yearned over her with a great longing. Why should such magnificent things be happening in the world of the soul and her mother never share in them? She loved her, certainly she loved her, if with rather an awestruck and unconfiding sort of affection, and she would make an attempt, perhaps a desperate attempt, but she could not be happy until it was made. It was no use her speaking herself, for she read a few verses from the Bible every day, and even the least attempt at conversation was the next moment brushed aside. It must be some one else.

Now there was at that time as curate of St Nicholas, the large church in the market-place, a young Mr Norton, who was a born evangelist. He was of the true old Evangelical School, a little limited in range, but self-denying, earnest, and good. He worked in harmony with Moody and Sankey, and though not perhaps an eloquent preacher, he was a remarkably good visitor. Miss Greenwell found his "tracks" in the humble homes she visited, and saw how, especially perhaps among the older folks in the chimney corner, blessing followed his words, and the Sun of Righteousness was beginning to shine on many a dark heart. Here was her messenger,

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 158.

and surely one sent of God. She went to him and explained. He was a quiet and modest young man, and he alleged youth and inexperience, and refused. She insisted, saying he had only to be exactly as he was to any one of the cottage women, and (with plenty of misgivings) he was over-ruled and promised to come.

Let the rest of the story be told in the words of old Canon Greenwell: "This settled, she came and told me. I remember saying, 'Now, Dora, you are touching fire. You'll have an explosion.' I may confess at once that in their long companionship it was my mother I always felt for, for she had an old-fashioned and reserved sort of religion, and lived a straight, just, God-fearing life, and my sister seemed to be always flying out of her reach. At last the day came that was arranged for the visit. Now, in spite of age and infirmities, our mother was extraordinarily shrewd and perceptive. We used to say she could read our thoughts by looking at the back of our heads, and it is quite true that without asking a single question she very often gathered up the meaning of some long story that was going on behind her back. This she did now, and though she said nothing whatever, if she had heard the discussion of the whole matter she could not have acted more incisively. She greeted him with old-fashioned courtesy, and as soon as he was seated, began, 'If you have come to see me, Mr Norton, on the ordinary terms of acquaintance, I am delighted to admit you to the circle of my friends; but if you wish to speak on matters of the soul, I fear I must ask you to desist. I have always feared God and tried to do my duty through life, and that is enough. It has by no means always been easy, but I have done my best, and I have no desire for any further teaching or experience.' I need hardly tell you that Mr Norton soon left. It was entirely Dora's fault, not his. There you see was the fundamental divergence. My mother's religion was wholly unemotional and had to do only with conduct; that she was stern, I admit, but she did

her duty without complaint and without weariness, and did it nobly. My sister's religion was strongly emotional, and she seemed always on the point of discovering something, always waiting and listening for something to be communicated to her which should be better than anything she had yet known, and this she looked for on every side, no matter where. She was not even a good steady Churchwoman, and after she left Durham wrote about some Americans who came from no one knows where, whom she declared had revealed the truth to her. It was a great pity; she attracted many round her, and it was a great pity."

There was more than pity in it. To stand alone, or to have close around you the "thousand charities" of home (and its thousand criticisms too) produces an entirely different outlook on life. Independent and noble indeed may be the soul that never had such ties, or else has forsaken them all "for My sake and the Gospels," but it is not the natural position, and does not bring out many of the sweeter flowers of the character; the easy give and take, the overlooking the small rubs of life, the wordless yielding of the will, the cheerful turning to another subject, these are the pleasant and most serviceable inheritance of the members of united and happy families, and I should imagine the Constables enjoyed those advantages to the full. This is not "spoiling" as it is called, this is not too warm a climate to make a good preparation for the cold blasts of adult life, but it is the very right atmosphere in which a wholesome and happy childhood may expand, and may strengthen into a full and generous character. It is not all composed of the sunshine of admiration by any means.

For instance if you begin tentatively to write for the Press, reviewers may utterly neglect your work, or may cut you in pieces with a few slashing words, but no one but a brother or a sister (and more especially a brother) will say, "What a long stupid thing," or will

take you by the shoulders and shake you and say, "I don't believe a word of it." All this our author missed. She kept a little hot-house of her own, where lovely sub-tropical plants grew and blossomed, and the few friends of her heart still go in one by one, and wonder, but it was quite impossible to open the door and let in the cold air of her home. The plants would not have lived at all in that case, so she made her choice, and on the whole wisely. "William," she said one day to her brother, the Canon, "I believe you have never read one line of my *Carmina Crucis*." "And have you read my *British Barrows?*" replied he. "*Of course not*," she said gravely looking him full in the face, and "*Of course not*," he echoed with equal gravity.

The one chance of intimate family sympathy lay in the relation with her brother Alan, and she exerted her utmost power to keep pace with him. Although he was equally impulsive, his impulses were not directed along the same lines as her own, and at last he strained the leash to breaking point. The story of his courtship and marriage, as told verbally by Mrs M'Chesney, is of extraordinary interest, but to recount it in full would take us too far from our aim. Suffice it to say that though in after life it turned out one of the most happy and suitable marriages that can well be conceived of, it began in a series of blunders and annoyances that threatened complete destruction, and for some weeks, at any rate, though he would not in honour break his engagement, he lived in a kind of rage against his fate. Some of his excited feeling was doubtless due to his getting into trouble with his Bishop at the same period. He was a decidedly rash man, and he brought innovations into the services of his church at Clifton with startling rapidity. Strange vestments, incense, prayers for the dead followed one after the other, and when reproved, he broke out into rebellion then and there, and left the Church of England, and, alas, he left Christianity as well, and used occasionally to say very bitter things,

and call himself a fool for having believed and obeyed for so many years. The effect on his sister was acute beyond telling. This was the grief of her life, and, though she was not much over fifty, she seemed to become "old," and was never quite the same again. She never spoke and never wrote of this defection to any one, not even to her beloved comforter, Mrs Constable, so that we have no traces to follow, but Mrs M'Chesney told me she seemed to be stunned, and as though her faith reeled under the shock, and the lapse of time were needed to bring her back to her position of trust and assurance of the truth.

To conclude the story of Mr Alan Greenwell in a few lines, I may add that his wife bore this change with equanimity. She was devout and good, if possibly a little ignorant and credulous, and she gradually won his entire respect. Hers was a very soothing presence, and she went her own way without argument, and by holding quietly to her faith and taking no account of his wanderings hither and thither, she brought him round to stand beside her. They were a truly happy and united couple, and though both had but poor health they celebrated their Golden Wedding, and both lived to the age of ninety.

But the sister remained in her loneliness. Although she lived long enough to see the return both of domestic affection and of religious belief, she never seemed able to take advantage of it. As in her grief, so now in what must be her consolation, she remains absolutely silent, and we shall never know what passed in her thoughts, save for traces of sadness and gloom in some few of her later poems. The initial shock of the defection had been so great, she felt as though the solid earth had shaken under her feet, and she could never trust to it again. The broken pillar may be mended, but it is not the same as it was. She had always been alone spiritually, and after this she seemed to be without family ties as well.

Our prophet has a great power of depicting gloom, of something far worse than sorrow, a brooding darkness that hovers over every department of life, and brings fatal paralysis to Faith, Hope, and Love.

"A fall of withered leaves,
The voice of one that grieves,
That grieves, nor yet prevails,—
For prayer that makes with Hope
A covenant, yet fails
For ever of its scope ;
For Faith's lone lamp that pales,
Still raised above the dark
Lone watery waste ; for Love that finds no ark,
But still with patient breast
Broods on, until its nest
Is filled with wintry flakes of cold despair ;
For Christ that still delayeth,
For life that still gainsayeth
The spirit's trust, for dark despair that sayeth,
' Where is the promise of His coming ? Where
The answer to thy prayer ? '
Behold the heavens are strong ; all things remain
As they have been at first, and hope is vain.
' A time of sweeping rains, of bitter grief ;
The dews lie thick on earth, and red the blighted leaf.' "

*From* "November," *Carmina Crucis.*

## CHAPTER X

## ROME AND RITUALISM

"THE faith of my friend," said Mrs M'Chesney to me, "seemed to be always changing in certain directions, and it was very bewildering. She loved the Quakers very much, and the Methodists even better because they are such a strongly social community, and always as she used to say 'liked going to heaven in parties'; and yet in a kind of way she loved all the main doctrines of Rome, and would sometimes talk as though she belonged there. Her brother Alan was at that time a clergyman of an exceedingly High Church type, and she tried to think she was one with him in all things. Curiously enough I never knew her make friends with a High Church or Roman Catholic person, and yet she often spoke as if the Church of Rome embodied typical Christianity, and we Protestants were some kind of aberration from type necessary, doubtless, but not exactly to be admired."

There is something here that requires explanation. The temper of mind shown may appear like weakness and uncertainty of a kind we cannot respect; there is necessarily a real division of thought between those who believe in the powers of the Apostolic Succession as conferred outwardly, and those who believe in the same solemn series as of a spiritual nature only, and as the belief one way or the other ramifies into every department of the observances enjoined by religion, it is foolish and undiscriminating, to say the least of it, to endeavour to walk in two ways at once, and get the advantages of both beliefs. But I would most earnestly shield her from such an accusation of confusion in thought and slackness

in practice, for, by collecting scattered hints from the pages of her works, we shall find she had a real guiding thread in her hand of which she never let go. Let us trace it out.

We turn first, of course, to the last essay in *Liber Humanitatis*, which is entitled, "Is Romanism a Corruption of Christianity, or is it its Natural Development?" and suppose that the question will soon be set at rest, as the article appears to be addressed either to a Romanist, or to one thinking to join that communion. But nothing is further from her thought than to give a decisive answer, and with characteristic delight she wanders along through a multitude of fine and suggestive thoughts, "of a strictly desultory kind," arriving at no conclusion. The aim, if there is one, is to show how very much alike the two great divisions of the Church of Christ are, expressing the very same and solemn truths in differing language.

The central foundation-stone of every sort of Christianity is the thought of a chasm between God and Man bridged by the saving Atonement of the Cross. It is impossible for man to come back to God as the Prodigal Son came back, with no sacrifice, no mediator, perfectly sure of a welcome and reinstatement. That may well be as some say, "a rational, healthy, glad religion," but it is not Christianity. Some of us speak of the work of Christ as De Maistre does, as "that tremendous Indulgence," and others of us speak in the simpler words of our Church Catechism, as "the sacrifice of the death of Christ and the benefits we receive thereby," but it is exactly the same thing, and whether the channel by which we know this great truth is the permanent Bible or a series of men, ever dying and ever renewed, is, she affirms, a trifle scarcely worth talking about. Through four or five more most interesting pages she goes on to affirm that "among all existing manifestations of Christianity, Catholicism is the one which is most evangelical, and gives the least

quarter to human nature, with which Christianity itself is out of sympathy." [1]

This astounding statement she illustrates very ably, showing Rome to be a sort of exaggeration of certain Scriptural truths; if Christianity brings discord and duality among men, here the strain is pushed to the point of anguish; if the word of Christ is "hate thy own life also," here we have the monk and the nun; if human affection ought to be repressed, here is an attempt to extinguish it; "if Christianity has betrayed indifference to the expansion of intellectual light and civic freedom, Rome has shown absolute hostility." [1] Beyond this, she does not seem able to fix her eyes clearly on any divergence between the two systems, and anxiously she cries out, "*Sirs, ye are brethren,* why do ye this wrong to one another?" when she reads the flaming invectives of her day.

So the great question of the title is left unanswered, except to say that Catholicism is the easier form of religion. "Protestantism, in its faithful education of the individual spirit, is a ladder like that seen by the patriarch in his vision, reaching even unto heaven, but in the strain it throws on the interior life too much of a ladder." [2] This metaphor she elaborates a little, showing how on a ladder no two can mount together, and how everything depends on the personal hold of the will hour by hour, and then she points with relief and pride to the road constructed by Rome, "a Giant's Causeway rising, like the magnificent sierras of Central America, in one broad, smooth, ever-ascending series of plateaux, rock-buttressed and engirdled, whereon men may dwell and flocks pasture, and still mount higher if food allure or danger threaten. It demands comparatively little, and gives much." [3]

This is no answer to the initial question, but it is the answer of her own private soul, "Protestantism aims high, but it is hard, hard. It binds heavy burdens, grievous

[1] *Liber Humanitatis*, p. 197. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 210. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 211.

to be borne, upon poor faltering human nature. I don't want a religion I have to think out all by myself, I want one ready-made from the hand of God, one that is there, and goes on and on whether I am attending to it or not. This I find far more in Rome, which is always making excuses for us." I do not think this abrupt statement is too strong for the religion of a few of her later years, and yet there is another side to the matter, which may rather be traced to her surroundings.

It must be kept in mind that the last twenty years of her life were those that saw the outburst of Ritualism in the Church of England, the reversion to pre-Reformation doctrines concerning the Sacraments, and the consequent introduction of intricate ceremonies expressive of adoration. There were also many direct secessions to Rome, with which that most interesting man, Archbishop Tait, had personally to deal, and our national monitor, *Punch*, represented him with anxious face and flying robes, endeavouring by means of his pastoral staff to hook back his leaping rams into the rather unsteady and fragile palings that surrounded his own particular fold. With controversies as to vestments, incense, lighted candles, reservation of the Sacrament, processions, and many other new practices, the Archbishop had a very lively episcopate; he had no precedent to help him, and exercised his own private judgment with commendable prudence and toleration, sometimes speaking a decisive word, and sometimes with great discretion putting off the evil day of a battle royal, and letting the weight fall on the shoulders of his successors at Lambeth.

In 1850 the "Gorham case" had been finally decided by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, a court consisting of six lay judges, the two Archbishops, and the Bishop of London, and had been given wholly and fully in favour of the Protestant interpretation of our various services. This had brought a reaction in favour of the Evangelical party, which lasted about ten years, and

then the tide began to rise, at first silently, and then in full vigour, sweeping away in some instances the control of the bishops, and in others the united remonstances of the congregations. Surely "the goodness of the Lord is over all His works," and, amid much that was puerile and misleading, there was real good in this movement for many of " the little ones " of the flock, for whom the Good Shepherd so especially cares.

It must not be forgotten that this was the period when the first terrifying onslaughts of criticism came over from Germany, and the theory of evolution was propounded at home. The minds of our real scholars, in whatever department they may have worked, were beset with difficulties as to authenticity and historical accuracy, and they were bombarded with questions scientific, literary, ethical, and spiritual, as thick as with the hailstones in a July shower. An undergraduate at Oxford [1] a few years previously had felt the gathering storm, and had written in his private note-book :

" I have a life in Christ to live ;
And ere I live it, must I wait
Till learning can true answer give
To this or that book's date ? "

There were thousands of souls in this position, and, having neither opportunity nor inclination to enter into the questions at issue, and having a dim idea that the Bible was " being proved not quite true," took a step backward in the history of the world's development, and found safe and quiet shelter in the authority of " the Church," where they could listen and obey, and believe all that was told them, and wait until the tyranny was overpast, and the truth of God emerged clear and clean from its baptism of fire. This was all very well for the listeners, but it was by no means so well for the clergy.

Mr Alan Greenwell was, as has been said, one of those

[1] Principal Shairp of St Andrews. He was later Professor of Poetry at Oxford.

clergy who paced along in the foremost rank of the High Church party, till at last his innovations were carried too far for his long-suffering Bishop. Harvest festivals were new in those days, and he went to such lengths in the exhibits in his church (it is as well to forget the absurd details) that he was inhibited, and in a fit of anger left the whole of his past at once behind him. Before this blow fell on his sister, she had earnestly tried to keep step with him, but, though she approved the basic doctrines, she could not endure the dress in which they were offered to the public. The young Ritualistic parson, with his long coat and his class-arrogance she positively disliked, and infinitely preferred as a "means of grace" the old rustic Methodist class-leader, with his labour-hardened hands and his defective enunciation. There is something amusing in the sight when she, the tolerant and over-tolerant, expends her wrath on the new school of thought; she calls them flippant and childish, and can scarcely find words to say how she dislikes their ways. She really hates their jokes about calling the cumbrous old-fashioned pulpit a "three-decker," and the high pews with doors "horse-boxes."[1] Often and often had the true Word of Life sounded out from such a pulpit and been received in such pews by eager thirsting hearts, and anything that was associated with the real work of the Holy Spirit was to her sweet and reverent mind, sacred and not to be touched, and the contempt the Ritualists at this date showered upon the simpler services of their fellow-Christians was to her intolerable.

What was it, then, that so persistently attracted her to the Roman Catholic Church, that she does not seem able to leave the subject alone? It was, as I have already pointed out, because she found here the same great truths translated into easier, more popular language, and rendered more suitable to the instincts of the natural heart. In spite of the inhuman austerities of much of the religious life, the whole system is to the ordinary adherent

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 161.

" religion made easy," and this she longed for with her whole heart. Confession of sin was a really difficult thing: how much better it would be to make it aloud, hear the promises of the pardon of God, and work out some little penance to keep the fault in mind and ensure against repetition. The eyes were surely as good teachers as the ears, so why not have the crucifix as a reminder?

She was always willing, as we have already seen, to accept " charms " as betokening a bit left behind of the actual presence of the giver, so was there not virtue in the relics of the Saints, yes, and in the reserved Sacrament itself? Protestantism confronted death with two bald, bare, awful alternatives; how sweet it would be to believe in purifying flames, which, like Dante's eager souls, one might fear to step out of for a moment, lest one should lose a corresponding moment of the surely-coming bliss. In every case she wanted " to be done for," rather than " to do."

Once, in a moment of mirth, she described her own character as " dependent, almost parasitical in its nature," and, though this is a libel, one may catch many a glimpse of a desire not to raise herself above the level of her race, but, in one great " solidarity " to look humbly up to heaven and be as it were " managed for " in any way the Creator and Redeemer may think best; she only stipulates that " the mother must hold the baby, and not the baby the mother."

I would not be misunderstood. Except in private letters to Professor Knight, or hints in conversation with her most intimate friends, she never mentions such subjects as these, but there runs here and there through her published works an insistent lament that religion is so exacting, so dependent on continuous personal faith, so grievously out of sympathy with poor, slack, stupid, easily wearied human nature, which is still half-animal, though altogether lovable. With this lament always present, she, although convinced that the principle is

wrong, casts backward glances again and again to the ancient Church, where the very minimum is exacted, and you can, as it were, choose the level of effort on which you intend to live. As a mother who coaxes or bribes a child into obedience where she ought to command, knows she is acting on an unworthy motive and yet resorts to the expedient again and again because she attains her end with less struggle and friction, so does our author entertain a vague hope that the end and object of salvation might be accomplished by some easier means than those on which she was working. Yet in the centre of faith she was true as the needle to the pole. Tom Constable writes: "Though she believed thoroughly in 'the Catholic Church,' her personal sympathies were, I think, always with Evangelicals and Dissenters." Listen also to this beautiful letter addressed to Professor Knight of St Andrews, in February 1865, when she was studying various French writers, preparatory to writing the life of Lacordaire:—

"I feel the essential differences between Catholic and Protestant thought and devotion. Some years ago, when I was first struck with the glow and fervour of a life like Madame de Chantal's, I used to think that at a certain level all Christians were alike; I mean I thought they became alike in becoming more one with Christ. This, of course, is true to a certain degree, but still the fruit of holiness in Catholicism is different to that of Protestantism, because the grand radical ideas which each spring from are not the same; in fact they vary so greatly that to become familiar with Catholic thought is to become aware that there is no possibility of any union between these two. The more I contemplate the difference, the more I seem to admire, and in some faint degree to enter into what is beautiful in each; *with the head*, I mean, for *with the heart I am altogether Protestant.* However much I may appreciate the value of some great Catholic idea, when I kneel down to pray I am Protestant, with Christ only between me and God, and between me and

Christ *faith*—individual faith, the faith which God has given me." [1]

It is this unmistakable individual touch, this life of each soul alone with God, alone as she was alone in old days by the banks of the Brownie, this facing of life, death, things present and things to come, with none to stand by her side, it is this gives the robust and virile tone of the Reformation to all her works, whatever sentences she may here and there insert on the glories of belonging to the Catholic Church. She was, I suppose, inconsistent, for the desire to be safely joined in with a whole multitude of brothers and sisters seemed to increase as the years drew on, until it received two wholly sudden checks, the story of which I will relate.

Tom Constable knew her in later days, both at Clifton and in London, and he writes, " I remember her once saying to me, Since I became a Catholic, it has given me such a different feeling for all the people about me. Look at that boy George, now (the youth who had just brought in a letter), how ugly he is, and how uninteresting and mean we should find him if we did not know that he is a member of Christ's Body, partaking the same holy food as ourselves, part of the same wondrous building." [2]

Then, on this comfortable and easy feeling, came two sharp blows. The first was destructive and staggering, the second was constructive and comforting. The first was the defection of her brother Alan, for he suddenly threw up his Orders, threw up all forms of Christianity, and announced himself a Positivist, a follower of August Comte. She never recovered from this blow, and it was as though the wondrous springs of life in her had lost their elasticity. Then, by the mercy of God, came the second event, also a sudden impact, stinging her back into happiness and energy, and leaving her with something good that she wanted to share with all her friends. It happened on this wise.

We have already seen her joyful co-operation with the

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 93. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 160.

American Evangelists, Moody and Sankey, and now two more pilgrims from the great West crossed her path, this time not to do good to her miners, but to herself. It was a Mr and Mrs Pearsall Smith from Philadelphia, wealthy, philanthropic, and much respected people. In 1874 they came over to England and stayed at Broadlands with (as they then were) Mr and Mrs Cowper Temple. Their ministry (to use the language of Friends) was so acceptable to the party there assembled, that in 1875 they were invited to return and hold public meetings at Brighton, when they brought light and comfort and a plan of action to hundreds of earnest but troubled souls.

The lady was the better speaker; tall, majestically upright, with finely chiselled features, and clothed in the garb of the honoured Society of Friends, in which she had been brought up, she stood, an impressive figure, before her audience. The American accent in its sharp nasal tones is to English ears, alas, very undignified, and it seemed surprising as the expression of so fine a personality, but after a while one forgot the speaker in the message. And what was that message? It was as old as Abraham's time, and yet it was the result of that very day's vivid experience. It dealt with the interior life of the soul, it told us God was a real Father, Christ a real Saviour, and the Holy Spirit a real transformer of character. It told us that if we could say, "The Lord *is* my Shepherd," we may confidently add, "I *shall* not want," because the present is the guarantee of the future. It told us that the promise of Rev. iii. 20 may be a real experience; that, if the door of the heart is opened, the Lord does indeed come in and dwell, and that throughout the after life it may be true to say, "Not I, but Christ that liveth in me." Such was the gist of the message, and it came about that the lady to whom it was entrusted came to Clifton.

A series of drawing-room meetings was arranged at Admiral Talbot's house. They were crowded, and were evidently of great value to many who were hungering

and thirsting after righteousness, and there it was that Miss Greenwell heard her, and her whole soul embraced the message of peace. Here was rest after long toil, here was Divine friendship after long loneliness, here was the mother holding the babe, here was experienced certainty after long and wearing hesitation. What did she want with an outward organisation of a Church when she was at home with Him of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named? What of a priest or a sacrament when she had the Lord Himself as her guest? All these things looked to her like empty shells, and her past life like a groping effort in the twilight, as she now was filled and flooded by the radiance of the Sun of Righteousness.

But let Mrs M'Chesney give her version of the story, wholly unsympathetic as it may be. "She was living at Clifton, and I was staying not far off, when I received a telegram beseeching me to come and stay a couple of nights with her. It was my little Dora's birthday, and I did not at all want to go, but telegrams were rare in those days, and I had never had one from her before, and I thought she must be ill, and I went. She met me with outstretched hands, beaming and brimming over with love and joy. Oh no, she was not ill, not at all, but really she could not wait another day without sharing with her dearly-loved friend some of her happiness. *Happiness*, just think of it! Why, it had seemed wholly impossible in this poor and stumbling life, and here it was, pure, simple, abounding happiness; and those wonderful eyes of hers filled with tears of joy. I stood there in her room utterly bewildered, and it was only after some little time that I discovered her joy was due to the preaching of this Mrs Pearsall Smith, whom she averred knew the secrets of the inner court of heaven. I questioned, and once or twice she began to answer and then drew back saying, 'No, dear, no. I am still too ignorant. To-morrow you shall hear her yourself.' Well, the time came, and we went, and

I confess that from the very outset I felt discouraged. First there was an earnest but formless prayer, and then she spoke. To me, as an American, the delivery was painful, for it was that of our uncultivated classes, and the substance in no way redeemed it for it was poor and crude to the last degree. The whole was assertive and unpolished, and I confess that a sort of anger was stirred within me to feel that my gifted friend was sitting there beside me, accepting every sentence as bringing with it a taste of the final exaltation and fruition of life. Well, the room was over-crowded, and after twenty minutes of this discourse I turned faint, and had to be brought home. I would not wish to judge any one by twenty minutes, but I could gather nothing, nothing, while Dora was believing these oft-told tidings to be the herald of the promised bestowal of the Spirit. The effect on her disposition was very marked. Nothing worried her now, fears and forebodings were gone, and also her Anglicanism had vanished, and she seemed to live in a state where no external rites or forms were needed. I returned to America soon after this, and never saw her again. I heard through friends that she became ill, and was irresponsive, but I can only bear testimony that my last weeks of personal contact with my friend have left me with a memory that will never be effaced. It was as though the very radiance of heaven streamed upon her through an open door. I could not follow, but I could look on and rejoice for her sake."

REDEMPTION

I am not skilled to understand
What God hath willed, what God hath planned,
I only know at His right hand
Stands One Who is my Saviour.

I take God at His word and deed,
"Christ died to save me," this I read,
And in my heart I find a need
Of Him to be my Saviour.

That He should leave His place on high,
And come for sinful man to die,
You count it strange ?—so do not I,
Since I have known my Saviour.

In heaven He found no grief nor blame
To bear away, no bitter shame
Of sin and death ; and so He came
To earth to be its Saviour.

And oh, that He fulfilled may see
The travail of His soul in me !
And with His work contented be,
As I with my dear Saviour.

Yes, living, dying, let me bring
My strength, my solace from this spring,
That He Who lives to be my King,
Once died to be my Saviour !

## CHAPTER XI

## THE LAST YEARS

With the death of Mrs Greenwell in 1871 the tie of her daughter to Durham broke. She had few special friends there. Miss Rosamond Evans had married and gone southward, and as for Edinburgh, it seems almost as near to London as it is to Durham, so the house in the Old Bailey was given up. Freedom was pleasant in her eyes, but it came too late; she had very little power of judgment in the affairs of practical life, she could not really enjoy travelling for the fatigues wholly overbalanced the joys of it, she sorely missed the fixed imperious will that had bound her days together, and there was no special reason to make her abode anywhere. First, she was a while in lodgings in London, then she tried the air and surroundings of Torquay, and finally, a happy choice, settled down for three years or more at Clifton.

Here the atmosphere was thoroughly congenial, and she made pleasant acquaintances, and a few real friends. The chief of these was a family of the name of Bernard, of whom I believe she loved every member. The father she christened Mr Greatheart, and used to address him thus. The mother, who was own sister to those saints and heroes of Indian history, Henry and John Lawrence, she called her "big brother," and came to her for defence from the many woes of house-keeping. The only son was in India (afterwards Governor of Burmah), and of the seven sisters no less than five eventually became missionaries, doing educational or medical work in India, looking after "Famine Orphans," and effecting quiet reforms of great value. The sisters were, at this period,

not yet dispersed, and the interests among them were many and keen.

But no "big brother," no friend, no anybody could take the place of the strong thorn hedge that had protected her unremittingly all her life long. She, who had lived under perpetual restraint, irksome enough to herself, but producing the most excellent effect possible on the neat little *menage à deux*, was now free to create disaster after disaster, and certainly she did so. Having always been waited on by elderly servants, staid and discreet before the old lady, and full of confidence and devotion toward the younger one, she had not the faintest idea how to rule; she engaged strangers, expecting from them the same conscientious service that was rendered by old adherents, and when they disappointed her, she would not dismiss them, but tried to correct their ways by talking to them, when her exceedingly democratic and genial manner only made things worse. There was no hand on the reins ready for a sharp pull up when a slip of negligence occurred, and, as undisciplined human nature will always take advantage of this laxity, the conduct of her young serving maids grew intolerable. It is pitiful to have to relate such weakness, but so it was. Vitally strong and able as she was in so many directions, here was a side where she failed, and she was not fitted to live alone.

After some deplorable adventures, she engaged a widow, a Mrs Lawrence, a shrewd, capable, well-educated woman, who for some years seemed to be the very person one would desire. She really loved her gentle mistress, she was a good manager, and she could say apt and amusing things when occasion demanded, but, alas, she began in secret to drink brandy, and as the miserable habit gained on her, it is my belief that this one fact will account for most of the clouds which gathered round the sunset of this bright life.

But all sadness may be deferred for several years, and we are thankful to turn back to happier days. Although a thorough "northerner" by inheritance, birth, and

every memory of childhood and youth, this exotic plant had never been wholly at home amid the wild moorlands, and dreamed of softer and more sunny climates.

Long before leaving Durham she had written, "I have a rooted and instinctive love of the aspect of the south of England," and this instinct did not deceive her, for she became physically stronger for a while after settling in Clifton. The spiritual atmosphere too was far more congenial, and she writes very happily to Mrs Constable, "I have good friends here; some such true, noble, simple servants of God. I often feel I can do nothing for my friends except love them. *That* I can do!" Again she writes, "Do you know, my Lucy, I met with a clergyman, a 'holy and humble man of heart' who reminded me of you, not in the way of resemblance so much as by giving me the feeling that you always do, of perfect rest and content as regards present things, with a little side door opening into Heaven. I need not say that I enjoyed being with him." And again, "I was so glad of Archie's letter; he perhaps of all the people in the world, men, women, and children, is the person with whom I feel the happiest, in that deep *solidarity of heart* which gives absolute joy and rest. He *met* me, cheered me, supported me at every turn." All these words are pleasant reading, and so is the single glimpse into her ménage, given in a letter from Mrs Constable herself to her son Archie.

16*th November* 1874. Clifton. "It is 9.40 a.m. and the little mite, Margaret, is preparing the table for breakfast. She is a sort of little Marchioness, but a very bright, happy little girl, and receives nothing but the kindest treatment (one need not say) from Dora, who is always full of pleasantness and of lively nonsense with her servants, but also from Mrs Lawrence the cook, who is tall, superior, and good-looking, and never was in service before, having 'seen better days.' Her husband was a sort of steward or master of the house to some gentleman, and they had laid by plenty for their old age, but

lost it all in the 'Albert,' some wicked thing that ruined many poor people. So Dora is really very well suited with servants. Mrs Lawrence is a vegetarian and they never give a dinner, so that is economical. Ordinary servants who are taken up with themselves or their lovers would not suit her. Mrs Lawrence refreshes herself with perennial cups of tea, and I often find her having one when I go down to have a chat with her. You would enjoy the complete indifference as to regular hours for food. There is no clock in the house except one in the kitchen, which does not go very well. Now I hear Dora and Mrs Lawrence laughing so merrily I really must go and hear what the joke is. . . . They were only planning dinner for to-morrow, when Alan and his wife are coming.

"Do you know that we are expecting our dearest Lizzie to-day? That will be a sight to do Dora good? She is very, very poorly, but will go on working and brightening that bit of the world she is in to the very end, I believe. Mrs Lawrence is anxious she should give up study now and not write any more books, but I see this is her very life, and she will go on doing what lies in her to do till she dies. We have discussed together many plans; her going to Nice for the sake of the climate, or to London where she has some valuable friends, and she has suffered so much here she seems to long to get away. Yet she told me yesterday that she thought she must stay in Clifton, because if people asked her why she left she could not give the whole truth in her answer, but would allege the climate or whatever the secondary cause might be. Does not this show an unusual feeling about truth? She says she has come to feel strongly about it.

"I read her your letter, and she was glad to find you were interested in the insane, for that is one of her great subjects now. Nearly all her reading and correspondence is about it. She has the gift of being able to do them good, and several times has done them real

good. I read her Essay on Slavery last night while she was asleep on the sofa. I suppose you read it at the time in *The Contemporary*? I did not know before that England had been so deeply implicated. Also I read aloud to her a very pretty and interesting article on 'Bough-structure' by Mr Oliver at Kew. She had a great deal more literature laid out for me, but there was not time for more for Alan called and stayed some time.

"Now it is after breakfast; and we have read beautiful words in Jeremiah and then in Corinthians together, and dearest Dora has prayed. She lives very near to God, and I pray that He may now give her more light and joy, for she has had very little happiness in her life from her wretched health and her very sensitive temperament. She is a most precious friend, and I am very glad I came. It ought to do me good and make me a better woman to know her, and I pray that it may. Your loving Mother, Lucy Constable."

It is a comfort to find that at this time she is still capable of some of her charming, irrepressible fun: "Tell Lizzy that I intend the violin shall be *my* instrument in the Millennium, and I shall be able to accompany her singing and bring out soul-piercing tones." And again: "If I appear consequential, you may set it down to my rich possessions. I have a new gown, very handsome. Also I have a shawl of chastened magnificence. I feel serenely complacent. It is growing late, I am tired, and can't even write good nonsense."

Darker days were drawing on. Some two years after coming south her ill-health became so insistent that it could not be thrust hastily into corners and ignored, as it had been through all her previous life, and she mentions it now and then with a sort of repugnance and hostility as of an enemy that was robbing her of the hard-won fruits of experience. There had been during nearly the whole of her life seasons of "a blank obliterated feeling," a kind of depression of vitality that she dreaded more than pain, and this gained upon her. She writes: "There is

a strange languor which has made everything, living included, an effort for many months past. I believe it is more a physical than a mental affection (some torpor of the circulation), for, when I feel (as I do just now) a little stronger, I am quite brisk and lively, and ready for all mighty enterprises."

And again: "I don't feel equal to the common routine of life. I have to *drag* myself up to everything with a great and wearying effort, so I intend to let everything, social and charitable, hang loose for a while, and be something between a fine lady and a purely domestic character." Her love never wavered; all else might come and go, but her love never, and somewhere about this time she writes: "Lucy, my beloved friend, my thoughts turn to you always with a sense of intimate trust and dependence, as if there were a great great deal in you *laid up* for me, like a rich mine not yet worked out. I have dreamed about you too; we were engaged together in certain gay and bustling scenes, and I got very much perplexed and worried, and even you were in a kind of *serene fuss*. I love you, if that is possible, more and more." Again she writes to Archie: "Send me some pens. You know the only kind that suit me. You promised them. It is a serious defalcation.

> "I certainly believed you true,
> And I was blest in so believing,
> Though now I grieve that e'er I knew
> A youth so fair and so deceiving."

Those were the days when sweet Agnes Jones was wrestling with the horrors of the huge Liverpool Workhouse Infirmary, and Sister Dora's noble spirit was inspiring scores of others to be the unwearied servants of pain and disease, and to find a nurse who was a gentlewoman was still a rare thing, but she came across one such in Bristol, and writes to Mr Constable quite lifted out of herself with admiration for a certain Sister Hannah: "Nothing you read of Romish or Mediæval saints can

really go beyond the ordinary tenor of her life; no depth of repulsion, whether physical or moral, or those unutterable scenes which unite both in their extremity, can daunt the ardour of her faith and love. For years and years she has nursed the poorest and the lowest whom no one else would touch through the most fearful disorders, and even in their own homes, living and sleeping just as she could. Her natural powers are very great, and she is blest with immense strength of will. All she does is based on Christ, built up out of His felt and reciprocated love. She was brought up a Dissenter, and is now very High Church, and is by no means free from angles and crudities—(few are the thornless roses even in the garden of the Lord)—but she and I love and contradict each other with great delight and profit. Her father is a dear old gentleman, so kind and cheerful, and so utterly given to all that is good. He and I are great friends, and, being of the more easy-going order of Christians, we travel along the celestial railway together with much content."

That the letters are all undated both as to time and place (the envelopes very naturally not having been preserved) is bewildering, but I hope I have got these right as to the year, though not of course to the month. The only guide is her hand-writing, which when she was at her best was small and fine and sloping, the "sweet Italian hand" of Shakespeare,[1] the authentic lady-like hand of the period, "such a hand as when a field of corn bows all its ears before the roaring East," as Tennyson says in *The Princess*, while almost as soon as she left Durham it expanded and grew more upright, and her last few letters, doubtless traced under the weight of pain and possibly with failing eyesight, are in a bold, round, uneven hand almost impossible to connect with the fine cramped writing of the past. The process of change is gradual, and forms some indication of the sequence of events.

In 1875 she moved to London. She lived in Great

[1] *Twelfth Night.*

College Street, Westminster, and from her windows she could see the Abbey and a part of the Houses of Parliament, and of this fact she was very proud. At first the change seemed to suit her, and she writes on December 8, presumably of that year, to Mrs Constable: "Dearest beloved friend, you will be glad to know that I am feeling better than I have done for what seems to me to be years and years. Something seems lifted off my life, and, while for so long a time even to will has scarcely been present with me, I am now again able to plan and act." It appears that about this time, or a year later, the Constables lent her a kind of family scrap-book, in which photographs, important letters, and autographs were stored, and this she comments on with pathetic pleasure. "I found there, pasted in so neatly, my poor dear Mother's really beautiful letter, written so long ago. It touched me deeply, as I know that although it belongs to that sort of writing which coming from the heart goes straight to it, it had also been to her a composition, involving careful writing and choice of words. This you will remember belonged to her era when a letter cost nearly a shilling, and when to write a good one was an accomplishment of no mean order. How sweet it is to feel that her conviction as to the undiminished quality of the 'regard between the houses of Constable and Greenwell' is so fully justified! Our affection has nothing to do with limited liabilities, and we need not fear to 'over-draw' in anything."

Any renewed health she had was but temporary, and again she sank. She writes: "I am indeed very ill now, but some days feel tolerably easy, and am very comfortable as to warmth and absolute quiet, the two things I really care about. Tell Lucy I have a stout good servant who works under kind Mrs Lawrence, and so leaves her free to fid-fad after me. Sometimes I think I shall rally again, as I have got well again so often." . . . "A friend of mine used to pray that her old admirers might prove constant, and add, 'After fifty is turned, you see, one does

not *annex* many new ones.' Indeed I don't wish to do so, for I feel far more interest in long established real ties than in strangers, however pleasing."

Again comes a delightful long letter, sending thanks for a sweet gift, and telling of the visit of one of these "pleasing strangers," the dear and friendly authoress of the *Chronicles of the Schönberg-Cotta Family*. It runs thus: "Dearest Lucy, I am growing continually more and more of a convert to 'the good old rule, the simple plan' of never doing to-day what can be put off till to-morrow, but I want to write to you to relieve my heart of a weight of gratitude—no, the beauty of it is it is no weight, but warm and light. I began to wear the Shetland vests on Sunday; they absolutely seem to create and keep up warmth, and I compare them to a chain armour of proof against the cold. And now comes your lovely scarf, a cobweb, Mrs Lawrence calls it a silver cobweb; it seems to me, however, most like the 'fresh cloud' which you once said was all we should need or plan to wear in heaven. I have it on now. Dearest Lucy, I now may truly be said to be *wrapt up in you*. I must tell you about my visit from Mrs Charles. Oh my Lucy, that woman brings and leaves a sense of comfort. She talks away in a hurried and rather hesitating fashion, and with what Bunyan calls 'a wonderfully innocent smile,' and yet you feel she hits the mark. Tender and unwounding is she, and yet 'for one of our sect' she has an unusually unfettered and even daring hand. How I do scribble away to you, my loving friend."

And it was not only in writing, but in the more exacting test of talking that, amid all her pains, she now and then showed herself as gay and affectionate as ever. "Everybody comes to London," she would say, and a large number of her old friends and some new ones came in turn to look in on her little abode and spend a pleasant hour. Mr and Mrs Tom Taylor, Mr and Mrs Alfred Hunt, Mr W. B. Scott, and many less known names, came in thus, and in the busy part of the year she seldom took

her afternoon tea alone. Her true friend from Clifton, Mr William Dorling, writes: "The Westminster clock which chimed the quarters seemed to go quicker than clocks elsewhere, and, until the beloved and honoured hostess showed signs of exhaustion, absorbed and interested visitors lingered on with inexpressible delight. Sometimes she sat up in her easy chair, but later she more frequently lay upon the sofa covered with wraps; and nearly always, except in the hottest weather, enjoyed a cheerful fire."[1] Her enfeeblement was evident, and what she once had been in sustained conversation, she was now by flashes, but those flashes, whether of cogent argument or of poetic feeling or of apt quotation, were as keen and bright as they had ever been.

The coming in of any one of the Constables lifted her bodily out of depression, weariness, and every sad delay, and brought her up to her best level in a fashion that seemed almost beyond belief. Tom, her friend of nearly twenty years past, writes: "One day, when I went to see her in her lodgings in Westminster, I went guarded by a complete list of trains to my home in the country, where it was important for me to get back that night. I found, however, when I had got there, that I had brought no watch with me, and that her clock was only one of those gilt French ones that never go. So I thought I would judge by the light how long I could stay, and if the conversation proved *very* interesting I would treat myself to the last train. I went there about half-past two, nor did I get away till about eleven, when all country trains had long ceased to run. There was always something more—and yet something more—that one of us wanted to say."

She even, under these untoward circumstances, "annexed" a new admirer. For a while she went to live in lodgings in Suffolk Street and then returned to Westminster, and in this short interval a pleasant and earnest young curate, then located at St Martins in the

[1] *Memoirs.*

Fields, discovered her on his own account, and had the good sense to be greatly taken with her conversation, and to visit her again and again whenever he had time to spare. He is now a dignitary of the Church, attached to a Cathedral, and the impression he gave me (this was during the tour to find her vestigia in 1906) was that she herself was so much greater than her arguments that these were lost in a kind of effulgence of her personality. I tried to win from him whether he had been at the time beset with intellectual difficulties, or at least the general trend of her conversation, but it was a lesson to see how anyone at once so intelligent and so sincerely interested could yet explain and describe so inadequately. As Tom Constable, who knew her so intimately, had left no record whatever of his eight hours' talk, it is no wonder that a stranger should fail in the same manner, and I lured him on in vain. That she had been some kind of formative element in his past life there was no doubt, and yet all he could say was that at times her speech rose to be "quite wonderful," that at times she had a kind of insight that to him seemed without parallel, and that, in fact, "You never heard anything like it," which words were repeated meditatively again and again; and with these I had to be content.

But we now draw near to the last scenes, and over them hangs a cloud of great sadness. Some sort of internal pain, that could not clearly be made out, settled down upon her as a companion by night and by day, and her baleful guardian, Mrs Lawrence, induced her to take a sedative to allow her to sleep. Surely the various calming opiates may be taken as a gift from God, as thankfully as chloroform is accepted before an operation, but both should be administered with equal care. It is strange, but amid all this increasing illness never once in her letters do we hear of a doctor, whose kind vigilance and restraining hand might have set the whole matter at rest, but she was left to the discretion of Mrs Lawrence who, as time went by, became obviously a drunkard,

and who could not bear to see her mistress suffer. The result was disastrous. A less exquisitely sensitive conscience might have borne the position with equanimity, but to her it appeared as a temptation from the evil one, as a sin, and her guileless nature was rendered fatally unhappy. She struggled hard against the habit, and at times succeeded, but success was not permanent.

Among her many splendid gifts, she had not been possessed of a strong will to fight against external circumstances; where principles were concerned she could stand like a rock, as may be seen in some instances I have already mentioned, but in things of the outer world she was easily over-persuaded, and the iron rule of her mother had not left much space for learning self-control. Mrs M'Chesney said, "It must have been in 1877 that Dora became permanently ill. I was in America and heard but few details, but what I heard made me sad. During those last years she seemed to have no will of her own. She never opposed the will of another, not even by a remonstrance, and she sank in silence and waited dumbly for the end to come. Knowing her bright, buoyant, generous spirit, I fear she must have suffered greatly. And I know her friends suffered too, for it seemed impossible to help her."

The family of the Bernards had now settled in London; the honoured parents were dead, and two of the sisters were in India, and one was Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, and a young family of nephews and nieces had been sent home from Burmah for their education. Two of the sisters at least made the most persistent efforts to help, but as the first step proposed was to send away Mrs Lawrence, the plans were met by a blank resistance. Not only were her "years of faithful service" brought forward, but they were told with bated breath that "somehow of late she had become so extraordinarily unhandy" that no one would employ her, and that she had "formed tastes that would lead her at once to the workhouse," and her mistress shivered as the

memories of Durham came over her. So the best had to be made of existing circumstances, and that best was not satisfactory.

Let us now turn to her last letters, written in a large clear hand and exactly dated. They are all sad ones now. Two are addressed to Mrs Constable.

" 1st April 1880.—I am so ill now I can scarcely write. The pain is something internal, which gives me no rest. My love to your husband—' greatly beloved '—and all blessings of this hallowed season be with you. Your attached friend, D. G." " 17th May 1880.—Oh my Lucy, I am embalmed in pain, I cannot die! Though I long and long for death, God keeps me alive for some reason. You are a heart's treasure, and it makes me so happy that you say I have been much to you; to me it seems the gain has been all mine."

Her dear and faithful friend, Mr Constable, died in the last week of May 1881. This seemed a final blow to her poor struggling life. He was dying when she writes her last letter to him: " 9th May 1881.—Dear beloved Friend. Oh, how I love you and think of you! I should have written to you long before this, but I have been so very ill, and even now can scarcely hold the pen. Oh, what you have been to me during so great a part of my troubled life—' Douglas, Douglas, tender and true! ' Oh, how my poor Mother loved you. You were her ideal." After the sad event she wrote thus to Mrs Cowan, with whom she had made a real friendship during her many happy visits to the north: " 30th May 1881.—Dear Mrs Cowan. All Friday I kept sacred to him. I could think of nothing else, the past so rose before me. Never can I lose such another friend. As to my dear mother, she adored him. My obligations to him were unbounded!—not that I ever felt them to be such; my relations with him and Lucy were far too intimate to admit of such a feeling, but gratitude is a real thing. He was a gallant and a chivalrous gentleman! As my mother used to say, ' My dear, he's just like David—like

David, I mean, in his youth, before he'd done anything wrong.' When I think of him now, that verse comes to my mind, 'This day has a prince and a great man fallen in Israel!'"

The very last of her letters that I have seen is written to consult with Archie about the epitaph to be placed over his father's tomb. It is dated 27th August 1881, and in a large bold hand, showing occasional tremors here and there, and she spares no trouble to make her intention clear. After lamenting that some of the most beautiful epithets have been too freely used in describing but mediocre people, she goes on: "His character was so rare, do you not think it would be well to have something distinctive on his grave, something to show our sense of what God has given us in such a man? I have thought of something of this kind:—

"'A man in his life greatly beloved. In his death deeply lamented. The friend of all the unbefriended. The comforter of those who but for him would not have known (or, would have forgotten) what comfort meant. Most prized where he was best known, in the hearts of his sorrowing wife and children.' Then some texts like these, 'Behold a man shall be a Refuge from the storm.' 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' Of course the wording and arrangement would need the nicest elegance and accuracy; Dr John Brown would be the person. Dear Archie, I can scarcely write at all. Such strange internal pains.—D. G."

It was not very long after Mr Constable's death that I saw her for the first and only time. It was the 1st of July 1881, and a very hot bright day, that the eldest Miss Bernard (afterward Mrs de St Dalmas) took me to her little home. There seemed to be a moment of doubt as to whether she could be seen, but no sooner was the beloved name heard by her than there were soft loving words of welcome, and in an instant Miss Bernard was down on her knees beside a sofa kissing some one who lay there. Though the day was warm she said she liked

to feel the sun streaming over her, and she kept her face partly hidden in a knitted shawl. I was full of life and energy, having not long come from Girton, and being now at work in the Slade School of Art under Legros, and I think my sight of her was coloured by the intolerance that is natural to youth, for all I remember is that her whole attitude was suggestive of suffering so continuous that her whole being was concentrated on endurance.

Was this the author of my dearly-loved *Two Friends*? My heart seemed like to break with the pity of it all, yet I could hardly tell why, for even so in utmost weakness she was attractive; the bright eyes, the refined accent, the sudden, apt quotation from Browning, all were charming. Part of the time she seemed forgetful and bewildered, and asked after Dr and Mrs Bernard in a vague sort of way. "They are at Home, dear," said their daughter with solemn gladness, "both of them safe at Home; for ever with the Lord." "Yes, yes," she said quickly, "of course I heard. I remember now. And he was Mr Greatheart, wasn't he, Susan? And your mother was my Big Brother, and she never, never failed me. Oh, how I *wish* I were safe at Home too, Susan!" and she burst into tears. Then some murmured words passed between them, and then, when Miss Bernard said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee," she uncovered her face and said earnestly, "Susan, that is true! it is never, *never*," and calm came over her once more.

Then, with sweet courtesy, she turned to me and asked me to tell her my name again, and I took the place kneeling beside the couch that she might be able to see me, and I told her how dearly I loved her books, and how I thought she said things that no one else in the whole world had said. She asked me if I had seen the last one, *A Basket of Summer Fruit*? I had not, and she bade me reach a copy down from the bookshelf, and gave it me in remembrance of her.

To me there was a touch of infinite sadness in every word and look, and I was seized with a wild desire to

take off my hat and stay with her there and then, to throw up all other ties, and get her into a more tenderly cared-for condition, and wait on her till she needed waiting on no more. But a stranger cannot plunge headlong into well-established affairs; Mrs Lawrence, tall and untidy, but with something of genuine affection in her manner, came in on some trifling errand, and we had to leave. But must I leave her thus? My dear-loved teacher, the one who knew the recesses of the heart of youth, and listened to its "wonder-song" of ever-fresh hope and adventure; who felt the charms of the wide world of learning and of Art, so new to each one of us as we stand in turn on the threshold of life and look out on the fair domain,—must I leave her to this solitude of the soul, this imperfect care of the body? I stood a moment in the doorway and looked back while, like a strong angel, Miss Bernard gathered her in her long embrace, and some murmured words of text and prayer again passed between them. Then we left. A vision that filled me with profound compassion went with me, and indeed never left me.

There is little more to tell. In the late summer of 1881 she was taken to her brother Alan's home in Clifton, and that must have been all for good, but in the early days of 1882 she returned to London. The great lesson she had been slow to learn through life was now brought home in doubled force. Health and high spirits, companionship and reading, everything failed her but Christ and His Cross, and to Him she clung with passionate devotion, as the one and only Helper and Redeemer in the sorrowful and dire extremity of life.

When she remembered the past, it seemed to be always with regret. So much had been given her, and what had been rendered back? "So little, so little," she used to say, "such an inadequate return." She was penetrated with deep humility, and wished to learn from every one. "I have often watched," writes Mr Dorling, "the seemingly unspeakable satisfaction which she took in inter-

course with those persons whom she credited with being well versed in Holy Scripture, and anyone who would give her fresh light upon even a word was regarded as a private benefactor." [1] She took more pleasure in plants than in flowers, and would say earnestly, "The only joy is in growth." Some time during this winter or early spring she wrote a few lines of farewell to Mrs M'Chesney, then in America, and ended with this pathetic expression, "One word alone would tell my story—Inadequacy."

Although she had so many friends, it is evident that she was left too much alone. In each separate case it could not be helped, and not one word of complaint passed her lips. And yet it is infinitely touching to see how well she was aware of the consolation afforded by that best of earthly gifts, a faithful companion, a patient, almost silent friend, helpless to stem the tide of suffering, but, by the mere presence of unwearied sympathy, acting like a chain or cable that prevents that tide from sweeping away the poor struggling life. The following lines were written a few years before while at Clifton, and seem now to our eyes like a gentle reproach in their embodiment of the very kind of presence she now so sorely lacked. Published, I believe, in some local magazine, and not included in any of her works, nor in her *Memoirs*, I will give them in full :—

"All through the day, my love, watching thine eye,
Holding thy hand in mine, I will be nigh ;
I cannot cheer thee, love, yet I will stay,
I will be near thee, love, all through the day.

All through the day, my love, seeking in vain
Wings for the hours that pass weighted with pain ;
All things are drear to thee, nothing is gay—
Yet I am dear to thee, so I will stay.

All through this day of ours, though it be long,
Open no flowers and wakens no song ;

[1] *Memoirs.*

Reddens the autumn leaf, withers the rose,
All through this day of ours, unto its close.

Worn is thy frame, my love, wan is thy cheek,
Low are thine accents, and broken and weak;
Yet sweet is our silence, the words that we say
Are sweet, as I sit by thee all through the day."

The best and dearest of her comforters, Mrs Constable, was, as we have seen, occupied with the illness and death of her husband, and then with the readjustment of her complex household, nor did she seem fully aware of the cloud of sorrow that enveloped her friend. As soon as she was free—it must have been in January or February 1882—she came to London to see if there was any service she could render; but her long-loved friend lay passive before the solemn gate of death, and seemed to be already out of reach. The Rev. T. Constable writes in 1907: "It was a mournful time. She always called my eldest sister her 'favourite playfellow,' and once when Dora was apparently dying and had lain for a long time unconscious, my mother took her into the sick room, and said cheerfully, 'Here is your old friend, Lizzy, come to see you, dear!' For one moment she opened her eyes, and said quite alertly, 'Oh Lucy, how very pretty she is!' and then relapsed into a stupor from which she could not be roused a second time. Even that was characteristic. She always said the unexpected thing and the gracious thing, and even when her spirit was going from us she could not make a complaining, depressing, or commonplace remark. 'Nihil tetigit quod non ornavit.' Singularly devoid of reticence, but with infinite delicacy of mind and heart and touch. 'Eine schöne Seele,' if ever there was one."

The shadows now fell thickly around her, and we can scarcely make out her figure in the gathering gloom. But the lighted windows of Home showed through the trees, Home, where comfort and companionship, rest

and love, awaited her. Perfect health was there, and the joyous fulness of life she loved so well, and growth and expansion, and there were only a few more steps to walk in the melancholy mist and the Eternal Welcome would be ringing in her ears, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!" Faithful indeed she was. These last few weeks brought her long spells of unconsciousness, but when awake she would assert her faith in Christ with an almost passionate earnestness. " He *does not* fail me nor forsake me," she would say loudly, and then, as though in the face of some contrary suggestion, she would repeat, " He does *not*, no, He does *not* fail me." Thus she held on her way.

Although I may have complained of her poetry, it is after all to that which we must turn if we would discover the most solemn, the most intimate feelings of her heart. In " The Song that None but the Redeemed can sing," we have a kind of translation or illustration of the word she used several times with which to describe her life—inadequate. One verse of this poem will be found on page 224, and now we will read another.

" We came not in with broad
Full canvas swelling to a steady breeze,
With pennons flying fair, with coffers stored ;
For long against the wind, 'mid heavy seas,
With cordage strained and splintered masts we drave ;
And o'er our decks had dashed the bitter wave,
And, lightening oft our lading, life to save,
Our costly ventures to the Deep were given,
And some of us were caught, and homewards driven
Upon the storm-wind's wings, and some rock-riven
Among the treacherous reefs at anchor flung,
Felt the good ship break under them, and clung
Still to some plank or fragment of its frame
Amid the roaring breakers—*Yet we came.*"

We see how the " costly ventures " of debate and speculation that she had borne all through life proved useless in the hour of death, and yet how her soul passed safely through the besieging storm, and landed on the shores of Heaven.

The strife of dying was long and hard. That strange region where the soul and the body touch and mingle had been peculiarly beloved by her, and now it seemed as though the two partners held hands firmly, and could not part. But the merciful end came at last. On Wednesday the 29th of March 1882, the spirit was quietly set free from the poor heavily-encumbering body, and on the following Saturday the worn-out frame was laid to rest in the Arno Vale Cemetery at Clifton. It had served her for only a little over sixty years, but it had been greatly taxed and overdriven, and old age had come upon it prematurely, and it was thankful to lie down in peace.

But who shall follow the flight of that spirit, which suddenly found the shackles struck off and the doors of the prison open? Faithful, endlessly faithful, had she been to the Cross of Christ, even if she stood beside it weeping. In face of a thousand allurements and a thousand discouragements she had held to it, and such a choice is closely followed by a glorious Easter morning. The dark passage is but short, and the light and the splendour are eternal. The disappointed whisper, "We trusted that this had been He," is changed to the glad shout, "I know whom I have believed!" *Neither can they die any more*; that is the right word for her, or rather for those who love her. Free, free at last, she stands in the presence of the Lord she so ardently loved, and we may, I think, apply to her the magnificent words written for the poet Cowper:—

> "No type on earth can image that awaking
> In which he scarcely heard the chant of seraph round him breaking,
> Nor felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
> But felt those Eyes alone, and knew, *My Saviour not deserted*!"

That is the end. We on the earth are stringently bound by the sequence of Time, and we have traced her footsteps one by one over the hills and valleys of thought

and feeling, and seen their imprint on the dreary flat that led up to the mist-shrouded shore of death. But after this there is no further mark, for she has begun to live where Time is not. She is there, and she is young with Immortal Youth.

" Long beside Thy tomb
We wept, and lingered in the garden's gloom ;
And oft we sought Thee in the House of Prayer,
And in the desert, yet Thou wert not there.
But, as we journeyed sadly through a place
Obscure and mean, we lighted on the trace
Of Thy fresh foot-prints, and a whisper clear
Fell on our spirits. Thou Thyself wert near ;
And from Thy servants' hearts Thy Name adored
Brake forth in fire ; we said, ' It is the Lord ! '

. . . . .

No stars appear, and sore against our bark
The current sets ; yet nearer grows the shore
Where we shall see Thee standing, never more
To bid us leave Thee. Though Thy realm is wide
And mansions many, never from Thy side
Thou sendest us again. By springs serene
Thou guidest us, and now to battle keen
We follow Thee, yet still, in peace or war,
Thou leadest us. Oh, not to sun or star
Thou sendest us, but sayest, ' Come to Me,
And *where I am, there shall My servants be.*'
Thou sayest to us, ' Come.' "

*From* " Go and Come," *Selected Poems.*

PART II

# THE MESSAGE OF DORA GREENWELL

The formless vapours white and dim,
Became my shroud, and yet from Him
Concealed me not. The earth is wide
And drear and old ; the heavens are far.
For guide to me He gave no star,
But near His Cross He bid me stay
Until the shadows fled away.

And by the Cross I will abide
And keep the word my Lord hath given.
Except the Cross and Him who died
Upon it, now in earth or heaven
What own I, claim I ? Now below
I seek no further ; here is woe
Assuaged for ever. Now above
I look no longer ; here is Love !

## CHAPTER XII

## THE GREEK

Thus her life ended, and now we turn to her thought—mists, damp, clinging, blinding mists on the near side of the river, and what on the other side? On earth a fragrant remembrance, and in heaven—as she herself said, "It is life, it is youth, it is love; it is all that is wanting below, it is all that is waiting above." It was not a satisfactory life. She herself described it in unflinching terms as consisting in "total inadequacy," and in truth those who love her best can scarcely demur to this verdict. Why, then, is her life worth writing and reading? Because of the inner struggle and victory on ground which is now the battle-field, the "storm-centre" of our generation.

Her friend Mrs M'Chesney writes, "*Inadequacy?* A strange word wherewith to sum up so gifted and so gracious a life! but I understand her feeling. She felt within a persistent failure to give a complete and harmonious form to life. But, by its rare suggestiveness, its power of light, yes, even by the brooding of its shadows, it has a force beyond that of strong, positive, practical lives. Their measure can be taken. Hers, with its far horizons, its dreamy distance, its purpling haze, is the heritage of artists and poets."

These words are true. Many can preach, and, thank God, do preach to the ordinarily equipped human soul, and win it to the ways of the kingdom of heaven, but few indeed can speak to the type of mind that has the gift of further insight. We need not place the ideal of "artists and poets" too far ahead of the more educated multitude, for while one in a thousand can paint or write, the other nine hundred and ninety-nine find the thing produced

expressive of their own innermost feelings. We in the majority lacked nothing but the skill to clothe our thoughts in some outer form. All that can rightly be called "cultivation" has its share in this inheritance, whether it be merely receptive, or take the stronger form of creation.

These five closing chapters will add little if anything to the knowledge of the outer life of Dora Greenwell, and if the reader becomes impatient at so protracted a treatment of the more speculative side of thought, let him at any rate miss out these two chapters and begin again at that which bears the title, "Two Loves." But if his interests lie in the regions of theology as well as in biography, he will find in the following discussion the *raison d'être* of the whole book.

Here is the magnetic pole to which her soul ever pointed, here is the supreme motive that influenced all her writings. Restricted, uneventful, and—were it not for her unconquerably joyous temper—*dull*, would have been the recital of her life, if it were not for the self-questionings and inner debates that lighted up her one chief subject with bright coruscations amid clouds of perplexity. We may ask, What then is her subject? Why does she feel called on to write on one theme with such vivid insistence?

The answer is hard to give in a few words, but I understand it thus. It is not the veracity and credibility of the Bible that is at stake in her mind, though year by year the storm of adverse criticism became more penetrating; it is rather the validity of psychological experience both as to the single soul within and the whole course of the world without, where too often the pursuit of Beauty comes into collision with the highest type of Goodness. She is, in brief, wrestling with some hidden but persistent contradiction which exists in human nature, she is endeavouring to fuse into a perfect whole two elements of which she sees the separate worth, but which appear to her to be about as compatible as fire and

water. She knows which of the two deserves to win in the end, and yet she rebels in every fibre of her being at letting the other sink out of sight, unrecognised, trampled down, and as having no right to exist.

Matthew Arnold had not yet given his books to the world, and it is he who has supplied the needed nomenclature with which to handle the subject. He calls the two conflicting spirits the Greek and the Hebrew. The position is, so he affirms, irreconcilable, for the Hebrew makes religion and its attendant righteousness the only thing worth living for, and offers up all the rest of life upon its altar, while the Greek accepts and enjoys the whole world as it presents itself to his thought or to his senses; he thus may have a score of ideals at once, embracing all those efforts after alluring beauty and scientific accuracy that we class together under the general name of "cultivation." The Greek will adopt just as much of ethics as he likes, and leave the rest alone, and as for religion, he is tolerant and over-tolerant, knowing that it may be accepted as one ideal among many, but rising up in wrath if it attempts to usurp supremacy, or to crush any other shoot of our varied life.

If we translate "the Hebrew" by "the Christian," the exchange of terms does not lighten the weight and difficulty of the decision, for the Gospel is not easier and more accommodating to deal with than the Law. It is harder, for it examines motives and tests the innermost springs of our being, while the Law deals with our actions, and occasionally with the more obvious of our feelings, as in the words, "Thou shalt not covet." The two spirits stand face to face as irreconcilables; like two foci, the Greek and the Christian, the love of *what is*, and the love of *what ought to be*, each is making demand to be the centre of a complete circle, and in each case to fulfil the desire of the one would be the absolute ruin of the other. Either earth or heaven must triumph—or is there possibly laid up in the secrets of the world invisible, an ellipse that

shall depend equally upon both foci? This would solve the problem, and it would be no mean task to find it.

It is the central spirit of every artist and every poet to delight in things as they are. For noble work it is true that there must always be an ideal, and this ideal is never found directly embodied in Nature; at the same time it is not wholly outside Nature, but is to be wrestled for and reached by that selective instinct that is the chief secret of creative talent. But *things as they are* constitute the permanent background from which we may never long be detached, and the Greek spirit revels in the grace and heroism or the richness and humour of our heritage in this world. From this point of view a world of perfect beings would be as uninteresting as a sheet of white paper compared with the whole scale of colour.

Man's aims and endeavours and conceits, the grotesque and pathetic contrast between his aspirations and his actual condition, his indignation, sorrow, restlessness, and ambition, these which are the very soul and vital salt of life, would be wanting in a perfect world. Here we have the spirit of Shakespeare, easy, tolerant, genial, creating Falstaff as well as Portia, warmly admiring the brave, the tender, the noble, and the pure, but finding interest too in the follies and extravagances and even the sins of mankind. It is impossible, says the Greek spirit, to paint a picture without shadows. Such a spirit as this will not be baffled by any restraint, so wide is its area of interest, so poignant its delight in variety and contrast.

The martyr at the stake is part of the show, and a very attractive part, for without sacrifice to conviction (which fortunately some people possess) life would become extremely dull, and in the martyr we can look on at such sacrifice in its most vivid form. It must not be thought that the lover of art wants other people to take up his own position; both the Monk and the Puritan are far too valuable as *dramatis personæ* to be parted with, and he ardently hopes they will continue to exist if only as objects of pity or of scorn. Yes, even the very life of

Christ can be thus dramatised, and so loses its urgent appeal toward action. "It is true that an intimate study of sin and misfortune throws up the sinless character of the Saviour into strong relief; but the student accepts the Saviour's character and mission as part of the phenomena of existence, not as an irreconcilable crusade and battle-cry against the powers of the world on every hand." [1] There is no desire to take sides, for that would at once narrow the outlook. If you fight, you lose sympathy with your enemy; if you act, it is but in a small portion of the field, and it is a grander attitude to sit on the hillside as spectators of the whole. If, as Milton did, we "leave the upland lawns and serene air" of our vantage-ground, and go down "amid the unquiet crew battling beneath it," [2] it can be nothing but loss. Let us not turn and twist life into the form in which we would have it, but generously accept it as it is.

> "O all things fair to sate my various eyes!
> O shapes and lines that please me well!
> O silent faces of the Great and Wise,
> My Gods with whom I dwell!" [3]

The philosophy of "looking on" is here fully developed, but like all other human things, it has its unconscious and inarticulate stages, and it is with them we have to do. In youth it takes the form of a desire for experiences, especially such as are keen and vivid; an insistent longing that early life should not be tied down to a settled end by any authority, human or divine, but should range over the world of sights, and try the full gamut of sounds, and stretch out the powers of the heart, head, and hand over a wide and varied field.

All the nobler souls desire effort as well as pleasure, the effort of adventure that invariably entails some sort of resistance and even suffering. "Happiness is an activity of the soul, according to virtue, in a life that is complete,"

[1] John Inglesant.
[2] F. W. H. Myers (Sonnet on Milton).
[3] "The Palace of Art," Tennyson.

said Aristotle,[1] and activity is stimulated and enhanced by obstacles to be overcome. "Smiles and the word Yes prove too tepid and relaxed a moral climate. Some austerity and wintry negativity, some roughness, danger, stringency, and effort, some No! no! must be mixed in to produce the sense of character, texture, and power."[2] This stretching of all the powers at once is known in some shape to all the eager. "There is an extasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this extasy comes when one is most alive, and it comes as a complete forgetfulness that one *is* alive. This extasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter,"[3] and it comes in a fractional degree to every one in whom the tide of vitality rises high. Life, whether physical, mental, or emotional, has a thrilling call we cannot choose but hear. There is glow and colour, strong light and sharp black shadows, and young hearts are for ever looking out on it, leaning over from the well-guarded windows of childhood, longing to mingle in its crowd and learn its wonders, even at the risk of wounds and death. We all know Tennyson's Sailor Boy, entreated to remain at home by many voices, yet going off alone in the cold light of dawn to the ship, whistling to the morning star, and utterly reckless of the call of death that sounds from the chill ever-moving water. He stands on the upward slope of life, and must he not risk the worst if he is to climb to the apex? Inaction is more hateful than even the certainty of death, and he goes willingly to his fate.

Can we look on with blame at all this energy? Is any feeling awakened in us but that of the tenderest compassion toward that human race, so endlessly deluded

[1] *Ethics*, I., 6.
[2] *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James.
[3] *The Call of the Wild*, J. London.

and yet so endlessly hopeful? The sounding song rolls down the centuries, filled with joy, success, failure, heart-breaking disappointment, yet ever-renewed daring and delight in things as they are.

> " 'Tis the wisdom of the centuries I speak,
> To the tune of yestermorn I set the truth,
> I, the joy of life unquestioned—I, the Greek—
> I, the everlasting wondersong of youth." [1]

In such a view of life as this there is but one intolerance, and that is of the narrow, chilly, inhuman minds who judge all things by the single standard of right and wrong. Surely, says the Greek spirit, in our complex lives there are many standards beside the purely ethical? There is the standard of the useful, of the successful, of the expedient, of the courteous, of the pleasant, and above all of the beautiful; why must everything be sawn and cut and clipped and trimmed till it fits to the single standard of " the good." To some things this standard is as inapplicable as to take a yard measure to measure the length of an hour, and to some other things because it is applicable it is ruinous. " Oh, leave me alone," cries the young heart, " only leave me alone! I will not do wrong, because wrong has in it a repulsive element, and I hate decay and death, but I want to be myself, to expand, fly, enjoy, suffer, to try my own experiments and make my own mistakes. I want life, real life, not to be ' cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd ' by the application of a rule made by others which proves a perpetual check on gaining experience. You speak of walking in white and being careful of your garments, but the man who works hard and mingles in crowds never wears white. Every least unconsidered trifle may tell as a stain, and I will choose some other colour more suitable to the world in which I live."

And is there not some truth in all this? Is the ethical standard invariably the right one? " Do no good,"

[1] *Seven Seas*, Rudyard Kipling.

says the sarcastic Chinese proverb, " and thou shalt get no evil." Is there not another sort of good, vivid, robust, and daring? There are other trees in the Garden of Life beside the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, and of every one of them we may freely eat. Blemishes there may be by the way, but the virile soul pushes on through all. We can respect the grim blackness of the collier, and the labour-hardened, coarsened hands of the poor cottar " biggin a dyke wi' dirty stanes," [1] because we know such men are doing a part of the necessary work of the outer world, and why then in the world of the spirit do we praise those who shun the knocks and rude buffetings of life, and walk as fearing " the mote that threats the white ? " [2]

And then there is beauty, regal beauty, what shall we do with it in the scheme of the religion of Christ? Alas, He ignores its presence, and even seems to condemn that passionate human love that is the worship rightly offered it, and all the while does not our nature cry out that it is worth fighting for even to the death? Here is an aim, a grand aim, beyond self-pleasing. Troy may be straitly besieged, exhausted, sacked, and even burning, but if Helen is safe within the walls all is yet well, and we are richer than the insolent army outside. In fact, to leave all metaphor, we can plainly see that we are dowered with a most inconvenient amount of ambition, passion, and the power of enjoyment, if we are intended to live as simply and as dutifully as the herds in our fields. It is not only intelligence that is at a higher level; that alone could be dealt with, but the " urge forward " is in every direction at once, and surely these strange gifts were meant to lead us to something more? Is education of any use? In its more liberal interpretation, in its higher ranges, it will become but a temptation to swerve from the narrow way that leadeth unto life, and so according to this theory ought it not to be condemned?

[1] " Twa Dogs," Burns.

[2] " Too Late," Browning.

If every new taste and art acquired must not be pursued with that exclusive devotion which alone commands success, it will surely deteriorate. Art will not endure to be degraded thus, or to become a mere plaything, unworthy of man's highest efforts. Thus does the heart of man lament and grumble about its beautiful heritage, and cry out, "How can I leave it? The demand for sacrifice is intolerable!"

If we have sympathy with our own youth, if we love the generation below our own with a great love, we shall listen to these outcries with tender generosity, and try to answer them. And then a strange thing happens. We find Dora Greenwell beside us, putting into words delicate but unmistakable the persistent wayward objections we scarcely liked to express. She has flown over more than fifty years of time, and come to our aid. She looks at us with her inscrutable and luminous eyes, and says, "I know all about it—I know more than you do," adding with the true instinct of the consoler, "It is rather worse than you think, and we must be very careful how we deal with the question." Sympathetic understanding is perfect, and she is quite sure as to which practical road to take, but whether she offers any connected solution, I must leave the readers of her books to determine; indeed we are not certain whether such a solution lies within the limits of human thought. Suffice it to say here that she was by nature an unmitigated Greek, and yet as she felt the check of the bond uniting her to the Saviour, she never once cut it or disobeyed the signal, but was drawn back a wholehearted and most willing captive.

"I struck the board and cry'd,—'No more!
I will abroad,
What? Shall I ever sigh and pine?
My lines in life are free, free as the road,
Loose as the wind, and large as store;
Shall I be still in suit?
Away! Take heed,
I will abroad.

Call in thy death's head there, tie up thy fears,
He that forebears to suit and serve his need
Deserves his load.'
But as I raved, and grew more fierce and wild
At every word,
Methought I heard one calling,—' Child ! '
And I replied,—' My Lord ! ' "

These are noble words of George Herbert's, nobler than anything written by Dora Greenwell herself, and they describe with concentrated force the struggle that was generally going on in her heart. From time to time she would get into a sort of rage with the limitations imposed on life, and (mentally at least) declare that she would break the bond, and run the risk, and brave the worst, and then—when the outer world cannot see that anything whatever has happened—she would be suddenly recalled into a path of singular humility and patient sweetness. What had wrought the change? A single word, the tone of a voice rather than its meaning, a glance, a half-glance, but, coming from the One she loved supremely, One who was suffering pain for her sake, the call was irresistible, and she flew back to kneel at His feet.

There is here a purely personal solution, and this renders it inapplicable to those who have not felt the mystic touch of recall. If we try to state her thought in more general terms, it might perhaps be thus. Christ the Lord looks wistfully at the whole of the educated world and says, " Will ye also go away? " The vain and frivolous and self-indulgent have parted already, and now shall those who love the high and noble regions of human attainment, shall they go too and leave Him alone? She looked round on life and saw it like a globe hanging in space. Half of it is lighted by love and learning, by art and poetry, a most desirable world, full of manly daring and home sweetness, showing June roses and September grain, a most lovable and dear world; and the other half sunk in the night of inexplic-

able wickedness, where rest is represented by torpid sloth and activity by cruel violence or a yet more cruel lust that makes havoc of all the natural and sweet bonds of our life—" a land of darkness as darkness itself and the shadow of death, without any order and where the light is as darkness." [1]

Then the question arises, Can the good and happy side go on with its existence ignoring the under-side sunk in its awful woes? As soon as the knowledge comes to us—and when childhood is past it has to come—the happiness is blighted and becomes unworthy, cowardly, selfish. Think of the Mediæval lady in the Castle, embroidering at her frame, singing to her lute, kneeling in her chapel, a model of all that was then thought worth fighting for, and think of the helpless captive lying below her feet in the dungeon half sunk below the level of the moat. Does she think of him? If she does, it is but as the spoils of war won by her victorious lord, and adding to her own pride in him. Compassion is awake at last, and we cannot go back to such a state of mind. And here among us stands Christ, born a Saviour and proving Himself effective as such in a thousand ways. He gives no sort of explanation of how the world He made has come to be so bad, but He looks round on His blighted field and says, " An enemy hath done this," and offers Himself as the Ransom for sin, the Seeker and Saviour of those who are lost.

We who have somewhat enlightened eyes, look round on our bright part of the world regretfully, for we have great possessions, but, so thoroughly do we trust to the sincerity of Him who is Truth as well as Life, that we even confide in Him in private our doubts about Himself. We say musingly, " Lord, to whom shall we go? "—implying that if we can find another better, one who could do the same work at less cost of pain and forsaking, we would leave Christ and follow the easier leader; but no, no, many have been tried and found

[1] Job x. 22.

helpless, and we stand by Him—" Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another ? " no, never another, " Thou hast the words of eternal life." The hard choice is made, doubts flee and confidence rises. No more reluctant and careful balancing of two things almost equally good, but a glad certainty that in leaving the human we have laid hold on the Divine—" And we believe and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."

But we have encroached too far already on the opposing province, that of the Saint, who knows that even the fair half of the world will not stand the tests of God, and without His predominance the rust wastes and the moth corrupts even in this life, and death, the great thief, breaks through at last and steals. So in closing let us revert to one of the many verses she has written in praise of the Greek—

" The world with stately tread
Moves down the terrace walk,
To pluck from garden bed,
From off its dainty stalk,
The rose, the silken rose,—the rose whose splendour
Is but the luxury of life grown tender ;
The rose, that makes the very summer round her
More warm, more blissful only to have found her ;
The golden sunbeams in their falling bless her,
The winds that steal her balmy breath caress her.
She breathes, she blooms, she dies in joy ; her duty
Is to be fair and glad ; her life is beauty.
Love woos her, wins her, pleasure will not leave her,
The sharp thorn guards her well, but does not grieve her,
To all she giveth free, yet none bereave her."

*From* " Christ's Garland," *Carmina Crucis.*

" Since He took that long account of mine, and crossed it through and through,
If He left me nothing at all to pay, He's given me enough to do ;
He's shown me things that I never knew, with all my worry and care,
Things that have brought me down to my knees, and things to keep me there.

Since He took this cold dark heart of mine, and pierced it through and through,
He's taught me to grieve for things that I did, and the things that I didn't do ;
He has shown me the Cross where He died for me, and I end where I begin,
With an eye that looks to my Saviour, and a heart that mourns for sin."

## CHAPTER XIII

## THE SAINT

HAVING given the personal testimony on one side of this permanent controversy, it is but fair to give it on the other; and this more especially as through every writing of our prophet from beginning to end the ideal is held up of the human soul becoming attuned to the key-note of Heaven, and so finding itself out of harmony with the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer of this world.

The contrast is marked between the voices of the Greek and the Saint. When the Greek ceases his lovely and light-hearted song, and is forced for a moment to listen to the deep undertones of Death and Eternity, we hear outcries as of the drowning, the wild incoherent complaints and entreaties of those who are threatened with an element which to them is unspeakably dreadful; then, as we turn to the Saint, we find a harmony of voices, sweet, solemn, and it may be severe, continuous through the utmost extremities of poverty and affliction, through disease, persecution, and the grave, in tune with Eternity, sounding on undisturbed through the nineteen centuries of Christendom.

It does not signify whether the voice we single out as a witness comes from the Cloister or from Puritanism, from the secluded Mystic or from the Methodist class-leader, from the Society of Friends or the Evangelical Revival, from the Anglican Brotherhood and Sisterhood, the Student Movement, or the Salvation Army, for even though these may differ widely on points of doctrine, all are in such close agreement on questions of the spiritual life within, that when we hear the testimony

we can hardly tell who is speaking. The chorus is unbroken.

There are camp-followers round every army, and there are compromises by the thousand round the Church of Christ that are not worth attention, but the central body, the true saints, are unanimous. Let me say from the first that I do not include in this number those only who leave spoken or written testimony, but those unlearned as well. If in every village there are "mute, inglorious Miltons," [1] so with more certainty are there dumb St Catherines and Samuel Rutherfords, and poor indeed are our lives if we have not known one or two such. Not one voice in the great multitude but is singing praises to the Lamb upon the throne, whether they are heard on earth or in heaven.

If we try to put the verdict of the Saint into a few direct words, it might perhaps run thus: That the Greek view of life might be the right one, and every creature of God without exception might be received with thanksgiving, if there were no such thing as sin in the world, but we find a heavy weight, an immense over-balancing factor, unrecognised by his light-hearted creed. The centre of gravity is changed by this single recognition, and our theories of life must be shifted and readjusted to meet the position, whether it is seen as deterioration in the individual soul, or as the Problem of Evil in the whole world at once. For the dark half of the world it has been proved conclusively that there is no other hope or help but in Him who was born our Saviour, and though the bright half may seem attractive in early youth, experience teaches us that it also needs salvation.

It is easy to talk of beauty, enjoyment, excitement, and adventure, as though they always kept clean, while we know how soon in practice the love of pleasure leads to self-indulgence, and this persevered in leads to blindness and, alas, to callous cruelty; and as for love, that prince over all, born to the purple, his travesty is close at

[1] Gray's "Elegy."

hand and faces us with degradations unspeakable. Evil, like the bacteria of disease, is lurking under the most harmless things, and is ready to seize on every new young life and corrupt it. Man is of very great value, and the rival claimants for his soul exert their whole force to win him over. He is not simple and complete in himself as are the animals, but is, as it were, unfenced and open along one side, and intended to have his whole character directly united with God his Father. This is the plan and principle of the human race, the capacity of receiving that which is divine by a free choice, the welcoming of it to the heart and expressing it through the conduct.

Such, as I hold it, would be the answer of the Saint, and St Paul, when he touches on this subject, is definite and unmistakable. He writes, "The carnal mind is enmity against God." Now an enemy may possibly change his mind and be reconciled, but *enmity* never can be. What then is the outlook? There is nothing for it but death, a setting aside and shutting out of the whole "carnal mind" or "natural man," that the "new man," the life waked up by the spirit of God out of the dormant seed within, may take its place. Every creature fights for its life, however worthless that life may be, and here we see before us a battle-ground of the spirits, a conflict that cannot end until one or other of the opponents gains a complete victory. Infinitely lovable is man in the sight of his Father in Heaven, and yet this struggle must be gone through before the two are in sympathy. It is no dramatic show with a pre-arranged close, it is a fight for life or death, and the powers of evil are extraordinarily strong and skilful and persevering, and only a hold on the living and divine forces made known to us through revelation can bring us effective and lasting victory.

See Bunyan's Pilgrim running with his fingers in his ears, renouncing every tie of home and country, and gather from the words of the saints in all ages whether

the vivid picture of his fears is the over-coloured vision of a dreamer, or whether it represents the actual truth.

Let me bring forward a few of the witnesses; they are at least representative, and every one is an illustration or expansion of the words of our noble leader, St Paul, in his classic phrase, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live."

Listen to Thomas à Kempis, a voice from far away: "Thus am I, wretched man, involved in a perpetual war and contradiction to myself; I am mine own hindrance and torment, moving different ways, and pursuing different ends and prospects at one and the same time."

Hear the drastic words of John Tauler, the great preacher of Strasburg: "The true follower of Christ must not only deny himself sinful pleasures, but also many intellectual ones which enrich his imagination and afford him joy. For, although they be not so injurious as the coarser lusts of the flesh, yet if the heart cling to them, they hinder a man's progress in the divine life."

Hear the same thought in the sweet singing of Henry Suso:

"I am not." O words unwelcome
To the lips of men.
"I am not." O words that lead us
Back to God again.
Speech of heaven from wise men hidden,
Unto children taught;
Few the words of that great lesson,
Only, "I am not."

Samuel Rutherford, amid his bursts of extatic happiness, has the same tale to tell. "Every man blameth the devil for his sins, but the great devil, the house-devil of every man, is that idol that killeth all, himself. Oh, would to the Lord that I had not a *myself*, but Christ; not a *my* ease, nor a *my* honour, but Christ! O sweet word, I live no more but Christ liveth in me. Oh, if

every one would but put away his own pleasure, his own credit, his own twenty things, his own hundred things, which he setteth up as idols above Christ ! "

Madame Guyon, in her solitary prison, writes : " Thus doth the soul ascend to her God. But to this end it must suffer self or its own will to be destroyed by the power of divine love. This is a state of sacrifice essential to the Christian religion. We must cease to be ourselves, that the mind of the Word of God may live and work in us."

William Law, the mystic, writes very deliberately : " Our own life is to be hated, and the reason is plain—it is because there is nothing lovely in it. It lives only to self and not to God, and therefore it is to be hated, denied, and mortified, and the nature, spirit, and inclinations of Christ are to be brought to life in us."

Most of these statements need re-wording to modern ears ; it is one thing to say that " flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and to quietly set it aside in favour of a nobler type that can thus " inherit," and another thing to load it with abuse. Does William Law say there is " nothing lovely " in our natural life ? The trouble is that there is so much that is lovely in it. The meadow is crammed with wild flowers, yet a good many of them have to fall before the plough of conviction that prepares the way for the field of wheat, fall along with the briars and thistles. The gentler statements of our present age lead to the same noble refusals in practical life, and that is all that is needed. Theodore Monod sings :

> " Lord, Thy love at last has conquered,
> Grant me now my soul's petition,
> None of self, and all of Thee."

Dr Chalmers prays: " Let all my fruit be from Thee, my true Vine " ; and Père Grou, in his private meditations, writes: " We seldom value the forces of self-will, until God's dealings are turning it out of our

hearts." Christina Rosetti speaks very sharply of this antagonism :

> " God harden me against myself !—
> This coward with pathetic voice,
> Who craves for ease and rest and joys ;
> God harden me against myself !—
> My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
> My clog which ever way I go."

Possibly the very best explanation, because so quiet and yet so convincing, is that given by Henry Drummond. He is endeavouring to restate the facts of the spiritual life in terms of Biology, and, while this may not in every case be wholly successful, there are many points on which his analogies are illuminating in the highest degree, and for which we may ever be grateful. And this, this fine essay on Mortification [1] contains a good example of his rare insight. He tells us that " the whole science of pruning " lies in " the cutting off the less worthy shoots in favour of the more worthy," and goes on thus : " The lesson of self-denial is concentration. Do not spoil your life at the outset by unworthy and impoverishing correspondences ; and if it is growing truly rich and abundant, be very jealous of diluting its high eternal quality with anything of earth. To concentrate upon a few great correspondences, to oppose to the death the perpetual petty larceny of our life by trifles, these are the conditions for the highest and happiest life. It is only by Limitation that we can secure the Illimitable." " The penalty of evading self-denial is just that we get the lesser instead of the larger good. To refuse to deny oneself is to be left with the self undenied. When the balance is struck the self will be found still there. The soul is the loser, for in seeking to gain its life it has really lost it." And that true poet T. T. Lynch gives us somewhat the same thought in heavenly words :

> " Oh break my heart ! But break it as the field
> Is by the plough upbroken for the corn ;

[1] *Natural Law in the Spiritual World.*

Oh break it, as the buds by green leaf sealed
Are, to unloose the gold blossoms, torn.
Love would I offer unto love's great Master,
Set free the odour, break the alabaster ! "

Testimony could be almost indefinitely added, but the dozen names I have given will suffice. The young and eager heart may catch at the severe and repellant side, and ask, " Is then life to be all bareness and brokenness if we would win the Kingdom of Heaven ? Is it all to be spent ' praying in white cells beneath an icy moon ? ' [1] I thought the Cloister was abolished, but here it is brought back in its severest form." The Saints with one voice answer, " No, a thousand times No. Only try it, and you will see how genuine happiness so overbalances the pain that the two will not bear comparison." This, the voice of the Church, admits that where that curious faculty of our nature comes in that we call " Excitement," that state of temporary exaltation where desire overpowers reason, that then the sense of the Cloister wall is needed ; but for every permanent faculty there is protection and renewal. Far from extinguishing warm human love, some of its very sweetest elements are added by the acceptance of Christianity—purity, confidence, and fidelity ; the will is strengthened until it becomes unconquerable and faces death cheerfully, hope is brightened because well-grounded, and every power we possess is lifted to a higher level. " Mit Ihn bin ich erst Mensch geworden," sang the gentle Novalis,[2] feeling his personality made greater and stronger by contact with his Redeemer. For all the saints who chose the pathway to God there was always " opportunity to have returned," [3] and the cross-cut to a broader way is made only too easy by friends and enemies alike. There is an inseparable chasm, an eternal difference, between the kinds of joy proposed :

[1] Tennyson's " Harold."
[2] *Geistliche Lieder.*
[3] Hebrews xi. 15.

" The earthly joys lay palpable,
A taint in each, distinct as well.
The heavenly flitted, faint and rare
Above them, but as truly were
Taintless, so in their nature best." [1]

The comparatively poor is laid down, while every possession that will stand the test of time in this life and of death at the last is safe in the hand of its Giver. There is no room for doubt as to this testimony, and parables are exhausted in showing it forth; it is the Sun of Righteousness rising after the black night, it is the blossoming of the " Heavenly May " [2] after the long hard winter, it is the child returned to the Father's house, it is the betrothal of the empty and wandering heart to the Beloved who is found at last.

A torrent of evidence could be selected from the writings of the Saints on this Subject, but let us sum up their satisfaction in a single verse :

" There is a multitude around
Responsive to my prayer,
I hear the voice of joy and health
Resounding everywhere.
' Thou art my portion, O my God ! '
Ten thousand voices say,
And the music of their glad ' Amen,'
Shall never die away." [3]

In all these quotations I am not giving you Authority but Witness. The New Testament is somewhat of the nature of Authority, and, if that stood alone, and was incapable of personal verification, we might well be in despair. It would be a beautiful dream, generated by man's aspirations, and nothing more. But that which we now see before us is something after the nature of a scientific experiment in which we may all have a share. It is offered direct to us, and we can give no verdict until we each one of us have tried it. We may feel far

[1] Browning, " Easter Day."
[2] Henry Suso.
[3] A. L. Waring.

enough below the heights of assurance of which I have spoken, but there is not one of us who has known the touch of the Holy Spirit but can verify the words of the Saints, if only by the bitter method of default. To know and to lose; then indeed "My soul refused to be comforted,"[1] for one sight of the Saviour, one ray from the ineffable purity of Heaven, and the soul is spoiled for mere pleasure. The best joys of earth extended to an eternity of time, are but a mockery when offered in exchange for Heaven. This is the subject of Browning's great poem "Easter Day," and is there so powerfully depicted as scarcely to need re-statement, and St Augustine's oft-quoted words about the restlessness of the human heart are proved true over and over again. The poet Cowper adds his quiet testimony, "He that has once found happiness in communion with his Maker, must be more mad than ever I have been if he dreams of finding it at a distance from Him."

In the light of modern knowledge we see that it is not reasonable to blame ourselves for an unalterable position given us at birth. The flesh is our heritage, arranged for us by God, whose patiently guiding hand has led our race up through lower forms of life. Looking at it He says it is "good," because it is full of the highest potentialities. The ambitions, desires, enmities, and revenges, are not in themselves sins, but they are the raw material out of which sin is made. The animals possess them and are innocent, but as soon as the higher consciousness awakes, then "to know the better and to choose the worse" is sin. But the fact of the existence of "the worse" need not be deplored and groaned over, for it is the great opportunity of rising.

As Henry Drummond so well points out to the boy at the cricket-match, "Unless the bowler is in you can make no runs," and here is the moment for advance. It is a great point to realise that *Temptation is not Sin*, but that here is the necessity for that endless vigilance

[1] Ps. lxxvii. 2.

that goes to build up the virile soul. It is perhaps not best represented by fighting, so much as by flying to Him who fights for us. "By faith, by faith, by faith," reiterates the writer of the eleventh of Hebrews, showing triumphs one after the other, over loneliness, misunderstanding, affliction, over the attacks of enemies, the treachery of friends, violent persecution, and cruel death. "By faith," all goes well. "More than conquerors through Him that loved us."

Our prophet, keen-sighted as she was, seems never to have clearly arrived at these conceptions. In a later chapter it will be seen how vividly she felt the antagonism between the flesh and the spirit, and how she tried again and again to have some kind of reconciliation to offer to the public. Let me only add here that her love of the Saints was unalterable, and that though she lived in days of limited views and great dogmatic certainty, never once does she use such a word as "narrow" in speaking of those around her, if once persuaded of their sincerity. Just before her premature old age set in, like a too early September frost blackening the garden flowers, she wrote her last book, *A Basket of Summer Fruit*. Discussions and laments are over, and here on a very slender thread of her own words are strung the testimonies given by the disciples of Christ that His service is no galling bondage, but is "perfect freedom." This is not an easy thing to explain in words, but there the witnesses stand—Romanists both ancient and modern, Jansenists, Presbyterians, French Protestants, Quakers, and Methodists, all of one mind and one soul as to the individual dealing of the Saviour with the heart of man. Here is the foundation, the *raison d'être* of all the rest, whether it be subsequently shown in ordered theological statements or in organisation. This is the little book she gave me with her own hand when dying. If amid the clouds of pain the vision of the Good Shepherd was at times indistinct, she was faithfully obedient to the end; she

would bow her face to the earth and "go her way forth by the footsteps of the flock." [1] All those footsteps converge upon the Shepherd, and she went with them, heart and soul.

"O Bearer of the key
That shuts and opens with a sound so sweet
Its turning in the wards is melody;
All things we move among are incomplete
And vain until we fashion them in Thee.
. . . . . .
Thou King for evermore, for ever Priest,
Thou, Brother of our own, from bonds released,
A law of liberty,
A service making free,
A Commonweal, where each has all in Thee!"

*From* "The Key," *Selected Poems.*

[1] Cant. i. 8.

Now let me turn my gaze
On Love's best Archer, sorely smitten, thrown
Aside by all His comrades, through amaze
And anguish of His wound, to die alone ;
Yet He, sore-smitten Archer, may not die !
Forsaken, shunned, abhorred and desolate,
Yet shall His arrows win back victory,
His bow arrest a doubtful combat's fate,
And *He shall conquer surely, conquering late.*

*Carmina Crucis.*

## CHAPTER XIV

## TWO LOVES

THE human heart is made in so strange a fashion that it can—especially if it is composed of the responsive material that is the gift of the poet—love at the same moment two things that are opposed to each other and possibly hostile. It is not exactly serving two masters, for where action is required, the will is faithful, but when in passive acquiescence, although it "holds to the one," it most certainly does not "despise the other."

In Dora Greenwell's heart this curious doubleness of affection may be seen in a remarkable degree, for she had two loves that pervaded her whole being, and the one was Human Nature, and the other was the Cross of Christ. Human Nature she loved just as it was, and admired so ardently that one might think she scarcely desired improvement; all its little "ways," its hopes, and wishes, and delights, were dear to her as real treasures to be gathered and hoarded. And yet, so does she enter into the sacred and awful realities that surround the Cross, so does her eager heart present it as our sole and only hope, that when one reads her words, one almost feels as though one had never fully seen it in its solemn appeal before. It is possible that holding at the same time this ground-work of the faith both of the Greek and the Saint was to herself a source of weakness and delay, but to her readers it is a source of the profoundest interest.

Let us first take the Greek side of her, the love of things exactly as they are presented to us, the desire to look on and experience, not in the least blended with a desire to correct and to "do it good," and we

shall find the number of examples presented to us are so many as to be almost bewildering. She loved "Mother Nature" with a sort of pagan frankness, not as transparent to her Maker's will, but even sometimes as almost in opposition to the Father in Heaven, and beneficent where He is silent. And still more did she love "domestic felicities," of even the smallest kind. A tea-table laid out in her honour with home-made cakes and the best tea-set, or some cream "got on purpose," awaked in her a gratitude disproportionate to the occasion, and as for a little bunch of the first snowdrops or the first blue hepaticas grown in some sunny corner of a Canon's garden and offered to her, one might imagine she had seen neither snowdrops nor hepaticas for the past fifteen years. She was also very incisive on the charm of having portraits and mementos of her friends round about her, pushing the feeling at times to the verge of superstition, as though a magic spell could be woven for the person whose gift of affection or whose photograph she possessed. This might be weakness in another, but she had the bright gift of wit, and saw a touch of absurdity in the things she did herself, and thus was saved from even the least trace of false and clinging sentiment.

To go deeper below the surface, we find in her attitude toward that somewhat perilous region we call Excitement a solution proposed by no other writer that I know of. Her love of fun and wild spirits was something wonderful. To her these represented no heedless words and deeds to be repented of in more recollected moments, no swerving from the ordained path, but a true exaltation of all the powers. To her it was as though some carefully plodding, laden traveller should suddenly be endued with power to spring and leap and run fifty yards along the road, forgetful of his burdens, and such a charming possibility must be justified by philosophy and by religion. It was like a trap-door opening in the blank wall of routine and letting the

heart through into a wider world where the action of life beats to a grander rhythm, a momentary escape from the tight limits of the personal, into the boundless regions of the beautiful and the universal. Let her speak for herself :

" Man, under the ordinary conditions life presents to him, is (more or less consciously) living far below his powers and capabilities, and it is to the desire to escape out of this fettering bond of age and circumstances, the wish *to be himself*, to live out his whole nature even for a moment, that we may trace our love for excitement, pleasure, splendour, and for that which, at whatever cost, intensifies and glorifies life." [1] And again :

" What we commonly call ' excitement,' is but the *awakening of the whole man.* Is it not, whether it arises from some tumult of inner feeling, or the pressure of strong outward exigency, always accompanied by a feeling of freedom, of power over outward nature, of escape from limitations of time and space, by a sense of being able to triumph over them at will ? There is surely something significant in its temporary insensibility to cold, hunger, weariness ; while excitement lasts we feel none of them." [2]

To give a practical example of the little bursts of excitement she loved to kindle wherever she could, let us hear her account of how she gave a dance, an actual *dance*, within the narrow limits of her own kitchen, well removed from the eyes and ears of the irascible old lady upstairs. The guests were washerwomen and others of the most hard-labouring sort, and her participation in the fun is so rapturous at the beginning, and her compassion for the dulness of humble life is so penetratingly sweet at the close, that the letter must be given in full. It is addressed to her dear Archie Constable, and dateless, but attributed to the winter of 1867-8, and the children mentioned in it are the daughters of her eldest brother, Frank.

[1] *Two Friends.* [2] *Colloquia Crucis.*

"The little girls were enchanting yesterday. If you could only have seen Polly dancing Scotch reels in the kitchen; she was like a virtuous and morally unimpeachable Mœnad or Bacchante—but still like one! Such glow, and life, and movement, yet as true to the measure as fate itself; her ribbon fell out of her hair, and as to her legs they were a joy for ever, they flashed like the many-twinkling smile of ocean. She shuffled, and cut, and pounded away, in an inspiration drawn from watching the gardener, a tall, heavy, *very* grave-looking man (with a very genteel, disconsolate-looking wife), who was, in this style of dancing, the *facile princeps* of the absurdity. Dora floated and bounded like a sylph, and Maud glided in and out and round about everybody as still and softly as a moonbeam. Alan was most hearty as master of the revels, supported by Hannah, whom I think you know. Everybody danced, with the exception of three grey and grim widows and washerwomen, who sat by, applausive, like a Greek chorus, soberly imbibing whisky and water. Even a poor broken-down woman-of-all-work—whose heart would have been broken, if hearts *could* be broken, ages and ages ago by an altogether unmitigable husband—joined in Sir Roger de Coverley, and passed under the Arch of Triumph with the rest. Does it not strike you, Archie, at any festive gathering among really poor working people—I do not mean domestic servants who are gay enough—how slowly they warm up into apparent enjoyment; how grave and fixed, almost imperturbable their faces are? This gives me an idea of the sadness and difficulty of humble life; the soil is too ungenial for flowers to come into quick bloom upon it, and they have to be caressed and warmed, and talked and joked into expansion. Oh, how one's heart does ardently desire that promised time, when the earth shall give forth her fulness, and man's deepest, purest capacities for joy be satisfied."

How she believed in joy! It has been called "the

discipline of happiness," and that was the sort of discipline she thought produced the best results. She writes: "Sorrow is essentially separation. What is its extremest form—insanity—but isolation? The French, with as much truth as tenderness, call the insane *les aliénés*. The mind, broken in itself, has lost the power of blending with other minds; its action returns upon itself. Joy is a uniting thing. It builds up, while it enlarges, the whole nature, and is the wine to strengthen man's heart and to brace it to every noble enterprise. Schiller's crown was well won with that one saying, 'Was ist dem glücklichen zu schwer?'"[1]

And again: "I feel no longer able to contemplate life under the strict and absolute aspect under which it once appeared to me as being a place of discipline, a training-ground for spiritual perfection, a way, in short, to a higher and more complete life. Now I can see grandeur, beauty, even divinity, that do not minister to any of these objects, and that even appear to lead in far opposite directions. Greatness, even Pagan greatness, irresistibly attracts my spirit, and at times I feel my soul drawn out of itself with a love that is almost passion for universal truth and beauty, those things which are eternal *because they are*."[2] These wide views of what "Goodness" consists in, tended to produce conceptions of the future very unlike those of most people. She had a miserly delight in the treasures of the human soul, and so dreaded a change that once or twice she touches on Heaven with a curious shade of disparagement.

Ideas of the future state were finding rather grotesque expression in the literature of her day, and at least two books, called *Heaven our Home* and *The Gates Ajar*, treated the many mansions with easy if not irreverent familiarity. The former book she, with exact and delicate fingers, tore to pieces in a review called "Modern Religious Literature," and it deserved its fate; yet, at the same

[1] *Two Friends*, p. 69. [2] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 14.

time, when a friend used some conventional phrase, she burst out with, "That's not my idea of Heaven at all! I want to go and have *a good time.*" This, no doubt, was a speech at random (and there were many such), but even in her noblest book there is a description which seems almost more worthy of Athens than of Jerusalem. Philip, the ideal friend, has related a dream in which the companionship and sweetness of earth attained to its very best, and adds that his first thought on waking was of chill and blank as of something irretrievably lost, and adds, "Oh how dim and colourless, how tame and uniform, did the Christian Heaven at that moment seem!" "But why," I said, "should Heaven seem so?" "Why indeed," returned Philip laughing, "I only said that it *did* seem so." [1]

Speculations about the future may be valuable as being characteristic of the type of mind that originates them, but it is our hold on the present that is of real importance, because on that we act, and there was something here that singled her out from other people, that every one who came near her was aware of, and yet that is elusive when one tries to set it down on paper. As the shooting star runs its short course across the midnight sky and then vanishes for ever, and as a thousand people miss it and only one sees it, so must the heart be in position ready to welcome the swift visitant, or, before you can say "See there!" the moment of beauty is swallowed up in darkness. All these pleasures of hers were of the simple, the kindly, the homely sort, but she invested them with the halo of her own bright spirit.

Mrs M'Chesney gave me a charming account of visits paid her. She came over from the States as a bride of twenty while her friend was well over forty, but they were like two children together, and as the twilight deepened the relief of these visits was great. The visitor always had to enquire first for Mrs Greenwell, follow the maid with quiet steps, be properly announced, and

[1] *Two Friends*, p. 163.

sit demurely answering questions. Less than twelve minutes was considered discourteous, and now and then a side-long glance went toward the clock. Then came release. The formal good-bye, the gentle closing of the door, the few noiseless steps, and then—hey presto !—up the stairs " with a sweep and a spring," and a burst into the crowded-up room, where every inch seemed full of the beloved presence. " There was always something new and strongly stimulating about her," she said to me, " and what *didn't* we do ? We reformed the Poor Laws, we established a beautiful and universal Church, we sang duets, we declaimed Shakespeare in a most heroic vein, we roasted and ate chestnuts, sitting over the fire, and talked nonsense. At another time she would translate a beautiful Moravian hymn or a strange old legend. Once or twice I tried to tidy her room, and that was a very difficult task, for just as she loved to give little presents so did she love to receive them, and her room became full of the most utter rubbish. There were badly printed texts and crooked frames made by children, straw-work tumbling to pieces, and anti-macassers and mats and penwipers in crude colours from her lowly friends ; but she would not let me destroy one of them. To her they represented not only gratitude and affection, but a sort of charm, a hint of the constant presence of the donor—' sacramental,' she sometimes used to term her feeling toward these objects."

Over twenty years later the same lady puts her thoughts into more studied language : [1] " Like Christina Rossetti, Dora Greenwell has the sensuous strangely blent with the spiritual. She is sensitive to spice-laden winds from the Isles of the Blest, to the fire at the heart of the gem, to the mystic warmth of the amber, to the golden fret in the amulet." . . . " Her nature is captive to scent and song, to spring's thrill of budding and autumn's swoon of spent life, to the clasp of love and death's pale unmating. But her spirit discerns through the

[1] In *The Academy*, 12th August 1905.

shadow-play of seasons, and the illusive allurements of sense, the something eternal within the evanescent."

A simpler account given by her friend, Tom Constable, corroborates this tendency as he writes not long after her death. " By nature she loved best what was gorgeous and richly moulded. She had the same passion Kingsley had for all that was tropical, glowing reds and purples, great spreading palms, rich and potent scents, and in her whole nature there was a love of what was free and lavish. ' That is a miserable idea of perfection,' she said once, ' to make the two ends meet. I should like them to tie in a handsome bow ! ' She liked what was bright to look at, to wear, to live in. And yet much of her life was spent amid dull surroundings. Always more or less of an invalid from the time we knew her, her bright lively spirit was always escaping when possible (without selfishness) from the toils ; and when escape was impossible, she remained bright and playful and sweet-tempered all the same."

Let us close with a very curious poem embodying her firm belief that the whole of human nature, the " natural man " as well as the " spiritual man," will finally be redeemed and restored by Christ.

" I had a playmate, sweet and wild,
We were born together, I and he,
And well did I love him, as youth and as child,
Oft would we chide yet still agree.

Oft would we chide though I loved him well.
Then was I told a stern decree,—
Never could we together dwell,
One must perish, I or he.

Yet was our day together sweet,
Yet was our night together dear ;
He was ever the first my step to greet,
I loved him absent, I loved him near.

I saw him fade in a still decay,
He sank at my side while our youth was glad,

And the light from the valley died away,
And the hills seemed many, and dark, and sad.

And I find not now through the world so wide,
I find not any I love so well,
And I deem he will run again by my side
Through some sweet abiding miracle."

*Selected Poems.*

How sweet an ended strife !
How sweet a dawning life !
Here will I lie as one who draws his breath
With ease, and hearken what my Saviour saith.

Who speaketh now of peace ?
Who seeketh for release ?
The Cross is strength, the solemn Cross is gain;
Who willeth now to choose ?
Who strives to bind or loose ?
Sweet life, sweet death, sweet triumph, and sweet pain.

*Carmina Crucis.*

## CHAPTER XV

## THE CROSS

LET us begin with the decisive words she herself would have used. Her wise critic, Miss Talbot, writes: "Dora Greenwell was a poet with a heart that would not let her pass (as most poets can) through this world leaving Christ, wounded for man, on the other side of the way." No; she crossed the road of life, and went up to Him, and though possibly with a defective view of how He came to be there and why He was smitten of God and afflicted, she saw the unfathomed love in His eyes, she remembered the twelve legions of waiting angels, and, kneeling there at His feet, she acknowledged Him as the one and only Saviour of the world, and enthroned Him in heart and life as the Hero beyond all heroes. Here was a sacrifice both "universal" enough, and also intensely, acutely "individual" enough to satisfy even her exacting heart, and she could say with truth, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed." Count Zinzendorf at only ten years old made the same choice; hearing discussions in educated society about the probable existence of a great First Cause he misunderstood the discussion, and going by himself into the garden shouted aloud, "If after all they discover that there is another God—wenn es auch ein anderer Gott gibt—so bleibe ich bei dem Herrn Jesu." But her choice was not made so young. Mrs Butler, when she first knew her at Ovingham, was not quite happy about her, as her own mind, more directly taught from the Bible, took a different view. When she was nearing eighty (in June 1905) "Saint Josephine" writes to me: "At one time I fancied (this was quite early in our friendship) that she

did not see clearly the Cross, the merit, the fulness and perfection of the finished work of Christ. At first she a little differed from me, but later she fully and heartily embraced that great thought, 'It is finished,' and brought it into her beautiful writings. She was altogether before her age in thought, a prophetess if ever there was one. We were great friends."

The first meeting with the Saviour is shrouded in the light mists of early youth, and beyond the allegory given in the *Two Friends* of wandering along the banks of the Brownie and coming to a great cross engraven on an over-hanging rock, the record of that meeting is lost to earth for ever. Some subsequent years were spent in dumb hesitation, but once clearly seen, her allegiance was whole-hearted.

She saw that while the laws of Evolution imposed on nature are endeavouring by the most stringent code of punishments to keep the animal world full of the young, the strong, and the happy, as soon as you enter the world of humanity, and more especially of civilised humanity, there are other laws at work that produce an opposite result, and that often those survive who are the most unfit for the battle of life. In practical life, was there one family in five hundred as happy as the Constables, with whom one might expand in careless luxuriance? Was there not a crook in every lot, her own not excepted?

Accepting these things as they really were, without selection, taking one house in Durham after the other, and then a wider circle of the surrounding pit-villages, she saw that the majority were the poor, the cramped, the disappointed, the weak, and the sinful; she saw feeble bodies containing yet feebler souls, she saw conventionality and inanition among the well-to-do, and the widespread curse of drink among the poor. She looked on with no condemnation for even the worst of sins, but with eyes that beamed with divine compassion; she stopped at no half-way house of philanthropic

endeavours after better housing, sanitary conditions, and so on—these humanising agencies were at that time scarcely thought of—but she flew straight to the central mark of saving the individual soul by any means in her power.

She saw it was with these, the unfortunate, that Christ threw in His lot, and that while the Scribes and Pharisees stood around the Cross and mocked, the thief whispered his dying confession to that ever-ready ear. In one of her letters she tells of a shepherd ceasing his piping to listen to a song that came from the far distance, scarcely to be heard, and yet recurrent and "sword-like sweet"; it was not the peaceful song of the reposing flocks, nor was it of the flying nymph or the daring hunter on the mountains, nor was it a funeral wail, even though "a high lament" seemed to ring through its changes. This song of "One who loved, of One who died," so took captive the heart of the far-away shepherd that for the rest of his life he was for ever trying to learn it, and all other songs were to him trivial and worthless.[1]

Let her now give her confession of faith in words more definite, and first to her respected friend, Prof. Knight of St Andrews (6th June 1868): "The death of the Saviour remains for me just what it is, a fact; the one great fact; in itself doubtless an enigma—Heaven's unexplained enigma—but the one which alone to my heart meets and touches all life's direst needs. It is more real than anything in the world, or out of it; that which brings the pitying, sympathising element into the whirl and awful chaos of creation; it makes of God a Being to be loved, because it proves that there is a necessity (of nature unknown to us) for the loss, anguish, and death that presses on the whole world, *and that God Himself has stooped to it.* How different from the old gods of Greece, careless and cruel in their continual serenity—*a God upon a Cross.* This, as Lacordaire says, is my theology: 'Summa Theologiæ.' The aspect in

[1] *Carmina Crucis*, p. 45.

which I see the Cross (since I saw it at all) never varies. It has saved the world, and it will save me." [1]

Again: "I feel only that the Cross consoles, as Love itself consoles, by the mere presence of its sympathy. It is man's desolation met by the desolation of God. The words that were spoken from it, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,' echo but do not mock the cry exceeding loud, and bitter as was that of Esau, which earth sends up from its thousands of wrecked lives and sorrowful broken hearts." [2] And yet once more, "While to those who are without, the necessary, the meritorious death of Christ remains the stumbling-block and stone of offence, the chosen point of attack, ever openly assaulted and ever secretly undermined; to those who are within, the Stone thus set at nought and rejected is the Head of the corner, the sure foundation, the Rock whereof Faith speaks, 'Set me upon it, for it is higher than I.' Love's sure abiding pillar of remembrance, whereon Love's secret is written and graven with a pen of iron for ever. To them who believe Christ is precious." [3] Quotations could be greatly multiplied, but these are enough. Here let us pause and consider her position, for surely it is here, just here, that her claim to be indeed a prophet is found. There are many sides to Him who is both Son of God and Son of Man, and other teachers who have loved human nature as she loved it have, almost without exception, thrust the Atonement with all it implies into the background of their picture, and spoken of the Saviour from their own point of view. There is plenty to say. Christ is the Lover of children, the Healer of the sick, the Friend of the poor, the Good Shepherd, the True Vine, the Mother-bird with its young, the Comforter, the Joy-bringer, the Light of the world while it lasts, and the Resurrection and the Life when it slips from our grasp. He also is the Teacher who draws upon the rich stores of nature, the perfect Moral Example,

[1] *Memoir.* [2] *Colloquia Crucis.*
[3] *Covenant of Life and Peace.*

the one stainless Blossom to be seen on the tree of human existence, the glorious Branch that has grown from earth's sad root, the single embodiment of the Ideal Man.

But all these points of view, these symbols chosen for our learning, were to her secondary, and details of that life of heaven on earth were swept aside and swallowed up by the sight of the final and supreme test. Here is indeed the crux, the parting of the ways, the choice that affects every individual life. The mystery is difficult to speak of in general terms, but the " black spot " of earth is crossed through the centre by a line of light. Again and again she speaks in her writings of the great Sacrifice as " remedial " rather than as standing alone, and says to Prof. Knight (30th June 1868) : " There are difficulties in the death of Christ which, like those belonging to its great correlative problem, the existence of Evil, *no reasoning can remove*. The Holy Spirit must lead us to the Cross, and leave us there to wait, ' till the day dawn and the shadows flee away.' " And again : " Christ's work of labour and pain and death is not, as some say, ' the deification and exaltation of pain,' in which I personally have never found any deep or true revelation of God ; but rather a solemn witness to *God's sympathy with Man's sorrow*, an enigma cast down by God alongside of the sorrowful problem of human life, not explaining it but recognising it."

If we look over the teachers sent by God, we shall find but few who are philanthropists, poets, and lovers all in one, who take this position. Look at Charles Kingsley. Not a word would I say against his arresting outcries in the cause of the miserably poor, not a word against his arraignment of the careless possessor of wealth, or against his Gospel of " hard work and cold water " for the young and strong. When he wrote, the sense of individual sin might be great, but the sense of collective sin was non-existent, and the horrors of sweating and of evil housing were at their very worst. " Christian England " was becoming an arrant hypocrite, and

we needed every arrow in his well-filled quiver to prick us into life and action. He too was philanthropist, poet, and lover, and yet, though personally his hope of salvation was in the great Atonement, he seems always afraid to present it in any direct fashion. It is as though he would say, "We have had enough of this. Let us look elsewhere."

But our prophet, Dora Greenwell, was wiser than this. She knew that the popularisation, and even the vulgarisation of a truth is a test of its fundamental and indispensable use to the human heart, and with eyes of profound compassion she looked on the travesties of the Gospel of the Atonement that were perhaps especially rife in her day. The stories of impossible kings dying for their subjects, the bare substitution of the innocent for the guilty under "the lightning-rod of God's wrath," the unscriptural distance set between the Father and the Son—these ever-recurring words and aspects she mistrusts as strongly as ever Kingsley can have done, and yet she sets to work to remedy the mistake in a wholly different fashion.

He works by upbraiding and discarding and by pointing out opposite elements in the Gospel that had been too long neglected; she works by endeavouring with infinite gentleness to discover what it is in these curious statements that is so attractive, why they are unweariedly repeated a thousand times, and, what is most of all to the point, why it is that they work for good on the human heart. She sees clearly that one may discourse for years on the beauty of the life of Christ, on the dignity of human nature, and on the aim of our Creator in placing us here, and although knowledge would be gained and a certain amount of motive might follow it, yet life, that inexplicable thing we call spiritual life, would still be wanting. Whereas the preaching of Christ crucified for us, even with the crudest illustrations of scaffolds and life-boats and burning houses, can and does bring in a new element, a regenerative touch, a breath of the Holy

Spirit " confirming the word with signs following." The Gospel of free forgiveness, when preached thus to the uneducated multitude, does not seem as though " framed in the interest of virtue," yet, strange to say, while it may fall unheeded on the ears of ninety-nine of the audience, and do there neither harm nor good, in the heart of the hundredth the ideas conveyed will take root, spring up, and produce the most marvellous crop of " virtue " ever seen, exhibited in the alteration of the whole character, and bearing its fruit every hour of the day.

Now here is a wonderful thing, here is something worth enquiry. Some force is at work here, some precious wholly indispensable element is hidden away under the confusion ; the rubbish is obvious, but grains of gold are somewhere lying in it that make the whole mass more valuable than the carefully-sifted matter offered by the more generally accepted preachers. How shall we find them ?

The book *Colloquia Crucis* may be said to deal with this subject throughout, but so desultory, so scattered are the arguments, that it requires great patience (and even some ingenuity) to combine them into anything like a connected whole. See first the tender sympathy with which she deals with the ignorance that in all earnestness and simplicity has produced the confusion to be deplored. She speaks of " the primary elements of Christian doctrine, the facts of intervention, substitution, vicarious satisfaction, which lie at its very centre," and goes on to say through the voice of Philip (who always represents the practical and executive side of the Christian life) that—" These are its rudiments, its glorious alphabet, stammered over, travestied through their unintelligent repetition, vulgarised, as a first reading-lesson might be vulgarised by ignorant uncouth children in a village school, yet containing within them the initials of all that poetry and eloquence in their sublimest tenderest range can ever reach." [1]

[1] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 103.

There is no blame, you see, none. The stupid human soul, in its leather coat of ignorance, almost enforces "unintelligent repetition" as a part of its education, and until we find some better method we need not despise this; and yet more important, she makes the ungrudging admission that the "facts" of which she has spoken are indeed the primary elements of the Gospel, and that if we omit these elements or even do not give them a central place, whatever system we may evolve it is not Christianity. She scarcely attempted an explanation, she knew the facts were true of their proof. Here was the balm of Gilead, here was the remedy, the only remedy, for the open sore of the world, and she loved to tell of some soul snatched from the edge of the pit by virtue of the sacrifice of Christ. Such is the tale of the dreadful old gypsy in "A Midnight Dawn," [1] and such is the hope for us, every one. Here is "God's mighty Interference for Man," here is "the death-blow to fatalism," and "the great incentive to prayer." [2]

The *Two Friends* are desirous for a more adequate re-statement of the truth, and agree in acknowledging the accuracy of the saying of Tertullian's, "All things ripen, and righteousness also," and speak together on the subject of the slowness of the development of eternal truth; how we cannot see in front of the age to which we belong (or only the prophets can), how God has century after century in which to work, and how this Revelation has "a history" as all other things have.

"It is for this," said Philip, "that He has ordained His Church, a heavenly Mother-bird charged with the task of keeping warm and hatching, one by one, at the hours appointed by His everlasting patience, all the germs of truth contained in the Gospel." [3] But God is just, and man is not saved by the amount of knowledge he possesses, but rather by the effort of will put forth. "Faith and Grace are equally, to both Catholic and Protestant, the

[1] *A Basket of Summer Fruit.* [2] Scattered in *Colloquia Crucis.*
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 140.

watchwords—faith, through which the human spirit rouses its strength to take hold on God; grace, through which God Himself is given to His creature.

"These words, and the great spiritual ideas which underlie them, are still the Church's spells in which all power lies, and they remain so, however often muttered as a drowsy charm, or deadened by ignorant and careless repetition. In them is life, and the life is the light of men." [1]

Moreover, the bright half of the world, the half that is illuminated by learning and made fragrant by poetry and art needs to be redeemed, as well as the dark half, where ignorance is the cover under which all manner of iniquities reign and revel. The blackness is obvious, and again and again the Holy Spirit throughout the pages of the New Testament draws attention to the fact that no evil can be so dominant, so hopeless, but what the power of Christ can cure it. The waters may be bitter and death-bringing, but they can be healed, because "the Lord hath showed us a tree," and that tree is the Cross. Enlighten, reform, regenerate it does, and that by a thousand proofs. But on the bright half of the world, Christ is silent, and seems as it were to leave us to find out by experience how poor, how perishable, are our finest treasures. Worse than poor, for "Art for Art's sake" leads to real positive evil. There is no relaxing of the demand of God for some form of self-restraint and self-denial, and two or three times in the history of Christendom we have seen this wholesale "throwing off the yoke and bursting the bands," [2] and it is clear enough that it means setting our feet on the broad road that leads to destruction.

In two notable examples, once at the Renaissance, and once in the course of the century preceding the French Revolution, we may see an open and blank denial that any self-sacrifice is necessary, whether for the good of our own souls or for the benefit of other

[1] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 161.

[2] Jer. v. 5.

people, and the result is a sort of callousness of heart that brings cruelty in its train. D'Argenson, describing the moral degeneracy of France under Louis Quinze, says,[1] "Ou ne voit que de gens aujourd'hiu dont le cœur est bête comme un cochon," and we may observe to this day that all noble aspiration dies wherever human life and the enjoyment of it are put forward as of supreme value. Even a mistaken object on which to fling away ease, comfort, life itself, an object such as that offered by the Crusades, is infinitely preferable to this torpor and death of the soul, this thick atmosphere in which the spiritual life cannot even begin to draw its breath.

All this is true, and we may have proved the truth of her arguments by even small matters in our personal experience, but our prophet is ever a lover of perplexity, and she fearlessly handles the opposite side of the evidence of History. "It would be vain to deny that looking at things on a broad scale, the spiritual basis has ever proved too weak to bear up the whole man. How narrow, how little human, has been in all ages the *merely* religious world! And how largely has that very world benefited by movements exterior, and even antagonistic to it; as when the revival of the Greek and Latin literature brought a fresh breath over Christendom. Mere spirituality seems to exhaust the soil that rears it, so that Christianity must always gain from extraneous sources. It has done so in our own day from science and general social progress. These are its friends, though sometimes disguised ones; and Christ still gathers where He did not straw, and reaps where He did not sow." [2]

These are bold words, but Philip is answered by the better read and more recluse side of her own mind suggesting that the whole earth being the heritage of Christ, may He not, in some way unrecognised by His definite words, have "strawed and sown in these very fields? Christ is the *light of the world*, as well as the

[1] *Colloquia Crucis.* [2] *Two Friends*, p. 172.

light of His Church. He is a Man, one to whom nothing that Humanity endures or achieves can be alien," [1] and she proceeds to point out that the command, "let both grow together until the harvest," is really given for the good of both, although the poor Church suffers a good deal meanwhile from the inharmonious contact. "Suffering from the world's enmity, suffering still more from its friendship, straitened on all sides, the Church has become straitened in herself, timid and distrustful, as that which is in antagonism must ever be." [2] This timidity was in her day most vividly seen in the shutting the eyes and stopping the ears to the new light brought in by scientific and literary discoveries, a state of mind for which she makes not so much excuses as a generous justification, although she could not share in it.

In both books on this great subject of the necessity for perpetual restraint and sacrifice—whether as seen in the single life of Christ in its perfection, or in the million-headed life of His Church in its imperfection—the argument is never brought to a conclusion. The friends stop talking quite abruptly. But there is a practical working conclusion scattered throughout both conversations, and it is this—That, given the strange and inexplicable circumstances of evil without and within, amid which we are placed, seeing that knowledge, cultivation, art, and human affection have tried their best for centuries and proved themselves ineffective against the tides of degradation and corruption; seeing things are as they are, the Cross of Christ is our best friend. Believed in, it brings freedom from sin and comfort in life and death, and carried as His follower the same cross brings us the noblest, most expanded, fullest type of life that can be lived on this earth. The satisfaction we feel in it is relative rather than absolute, and encourages a looking forward to a future, when the repressed and struggling plant will come out into full and lavish bloom.

[1] *Two Friends*, p. 173. [2] *Colloquia Crucis*.

"I sometimes wonder," said Philip, "if heaven will be the resurrection of our life, *of our whole life*, if it will be the bloom-time and expansion, not only of our spiritual being, but of all those germs of natural delight which seem unable to unfold here. How much there is in life to which life itself is unfriendly!" "Yet how fair and exalted a thing, under its happier conditions, is natural life! in its *illusions*, which are but *truths anticipated* in the clear second-sight of the soul; in its elations, when the heart dilates and lifts up the whole of life along with it!"[1] Again and again she reverts to this her favourite theme, and yet ever faithfully comes back to the rule that holds good for the present emergency—"The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

In closing, let us read one or two letters addressed to Professor Knight of St Andrews (him of Wordsworth fame). It is fully evident, from the long and careful correspondence she carried on with him for seven years (from 1863 to 1870), that she by no means always agreed with him, yet, so entirely sympathetic to her was the temper of his mind, at once genial and fastidious, so heartily did she admire the delicate poetic discrimination shown in his works, that she went bravely on, submitting to him her theological difficulties as she did to no other. Whether he was able to cope with them seemed to her to be immaterial, for she liked his handling of them. The Constables occupied a wholly different region in her friendship, and there are no other letters extant even remotely resembling those to Dr Knight in their frank and persistent discussion of matters theologic, philosophic, and literary. Some of them, dealing with articles then appearing in the greater reviews, are necessarily of transitory value, though it is exceedingly interesting to observe how she touches on Bishop Colenso, and other figures who were making the history of the thought of

[1] *Two Friends*, p. 157.

her times. These letters can in great part be read in her *Memoirs* (p. 66-131), and we must keep to the few pages which bear upon the central subject. She writes:

29*th July* 1870: "I sometimes feel troubled about the idea that you and Alan have of evil; and yet it shows me that you have both of you been good and happy in more than a usual degree, not to have known the depths of Satan in sinfulness, nor in any extremity of anguish. If we look at Satan only as the foe to natural happiness, the blight and destroyer of humanity, who can *hope* that he should be forgiven? To me it seems so wonderful that you should not *require* to hate some one, seeing what desolations are wrought in the earth. Hatred to the devil is inwrought into the innermost fibre of my soul, as I suppose we only can hate a being with whom we have a fearful possibility of contact. Again, with regard to what Alan said about all our propensions being good; this, in a strained way, may apply to many of them; fraud, for instance, may be an exaggerated form of self-love, but where, in good, is the root of cruelty, and all that is simply malign? And where, of other aspects of human nature—pages one does not dare to look into too deeply—where evil, such as the outbreak in Durham Jail of which I told you, is evidently delighted in for its own sake? The very language lost all that made it human. Evil seems to me to have all the characteristics of life, of independent life; it has movement, communicativeness, growth, reproduction, and a power of assimilating to itself whatever it can gain contact with, unless hindered by some antidotal energy. How does this agree with its being a mere warp or distortion, or with its being a lower form of good? Evil is a kingdom, a spiritual force with a personal ruler, *the* kingdom that Jesus came to destroy utterly." [1]

These are wise words, showing her appreciation of the great truth that the Monism which is the only possible basis of Philosophy has, in the present strange emer-

[1] *Memoirs.*

gency, to be set aside in favour of the strong Dualism of Christianity. Was the struggle and agony of our Lord but a dramatic show, "not so real as a gladiatorial combat?" An athlete does not put forth his whole strength unless there is a chance of failure, and our Saviour's baptism, fasting and temptation, His agony and bloody sweat, prove the intensity of the struggle. "The very fact of war between the two implies some degree of equality." If our Creator has chosen to lay aside His one invincible weapon, force—omnipotent force—and to fight only with such weapons as we can also use, moral and spiritual weapons, then indeed the battle is a real one, and the Cross is the only solution of the great mystery.

"So let the earth be old
And like a wicked Fate, from off her reel
Spin evil changes. Let the skies in cold
Clear splendour, arch us in a vault of steel.
The heavens are far away, yet God is near;
I feel a need divine
That meeteth need of mine,
No rigid fate I meet, no law austere;
I see my God Who turns,
And o'er His creature yearns,—
Upon the Cross God gives, and claims, the tear.

*From* "Summa Theologiæ," *Carmina Crucis.*

" Through water and through fire,
We came to Thee, and not through these alone,
We came to Thee by blood. Thou didst require
One only sacrifice ; and like Thine own
The life Thou gavest us Thou didst desire.
And all was ready for us. So, the knife,
And cloven wood were waiting ; bound or free,
We too were ready. In the battle strife
Or by the lonely altar, unto Thee.
We offered love for love, and life for life.
Through swords, through seas, o'er sands of burning flame,
We came to Thee ! through toil and pain and loss—
Yea, all things failed us but the stedfast Cross,
And hearts that clave to it ; while grief and shame
Still followed where we followed. *Yet we came.*"

*Selected Poems.*

## CHAPTER XVI

## ANTAGONISM AND RECONCILIATION

And now we must close. Much has already been said on this point, and yet there is ever more to say, for truly our prophet gave her life to the consideration of this antagonism, this war between flesh and spirit, this break in sympathy between God and the world He Himself has made. Where does it lie? Whose fault is it? In what does it consist? Where is the remedy to be looked for? Over and over again she returns to such questions as these, and sometimes as it were unconsciously and in spite of having other ostensible aims in view.

In the book *Liber Humanitatis* she wrote three essays bearing directly upon the subject; one on "The Dignity of the Human Body," another on "The Connection between the Animal and the Spiritual Nature in Man," and a third on "The Relation between the Natural and the Supernatural Life." This last has in it some touching and deeply sympathetic passages relating to the history of Israel. It tells how the chosen nation found extraordinary difficulty in living in immediate contact with God, and goes on to say that this "continual desire to escape from the costly, heavy, sacrificing friendship" into the easier regions of some form of idolatry is not over to-day, but is vividly repeated in the Christian experience; yet, on the whole, these essays tell us less than the sighs that escape her as she handles other matters. She seems, without being aware of it, to impersonate all the strong youth, all the best and freshest part of human nature, and to imply that it has only too long been dumb amid its many sorrows. Like Job, in chapters twenty-nine to thirty-one, she stands up in a passion of vindica-

tion, not for herself alone, but for all the nobler portions of her race, recounting before the Most High all its good deeds; the sense of justice, the protection of the weak, the generous, light-giving position it has so often adopted toward those who have had fewer advantages, the heroic courage, the patient endurance, the flinging away of life itself in some cause deemed worthy, as freely as one might fling a bucket of water on a fire—it is these things she has in mind, and she challenges the searching eyes of God to say if He can find anything better in the universe. The attempts may be crude and ignorant, but is not the motive good? Is there any sin, or base self-interest, lurking beneath the fair exterior? Like the young Ruler she looks straight into the eyes of Christ and says, "These things have we done. Are you not content? What lack we yet?" After this, there is no more to say.

And is the position in itself blameworthy? We read, "And Jesus looking upon him, loved him," and such words are not written of any other suppliant, though this one came to vindicate himself, and all the others came humbly to beg. Our Lord felt He had before Him something of a kindred spirit. And the position of Job is made yet more clear. He is "my servant Job" at the end of his long trial, even as he was at the beginning; his open and abrupt self-defence, and his outspoken arraignment of God are not condemned, and it is he and he alone who has to offer sacrifices for the pardon of his conventional friends, because they had pleaded falsely. The seal is set for ever on the two methods of approach to the Most High in the words, "because they have not spoken of me the thing that is right, like my servant Job hath."

It is almost impossible to exaggerate the sharpness of the edge of the antagonism that she felt. Her heart clung to both sides, and there were times when her being seems to be almost torn in two in the struggle. Listen to one of her descriptions of the sorrows to be found in

following our Lord's injunction, "Take up the cross and follow me." She writes, "The very shape and outline of the Cross is suggestive of anguish, for, while it imitates the form of man, it contradicts his two strongest natural instincts, the desire for action and the yearning for rest. There, man stretches out his arms, but to meet no kind reciprocating pressure; there, his feet are made fast as in the stocks, and the iron enters into his soul." [1]

Again, hear how she complains of desolation in *The Soul's Legend.* God is so great and man is so little, so poor, that surely all the initiative, all the benefactions must come from the Divine side? The tale is that of a woe-worn woman lost as a child among the wild tribes of the Indians, and she is talking to an accredited messenger come from a great King far away: "If I were indeed, as thou sayest, the daughter of a chief so mighty, how came I as an infant to be abandoned by all? If I were lost, it were strange that I were so long unsought for; and if I were forsaken by my father *then it is I who have to forgive.*" [2] Again, in another mysterious story we have these penetrating and unforgettable words: "I know not why His life was painful and His death so full of shame; I only know it was for her that He endured both life and death. And for her truly He died once; *but how often has she died for Him*? For His sake she has died to all things that make life lovely, yea, even unto love itself. And if hers was the glory of the union, had she indeed all the gain? Is it well with the rough frieze frayed and fretted with the costly inwrought thread of gold? with the frail jar of porcelain in which an acorn lies buried? with the soul that travails with a mighty incessant birth? Is it well with the life that is *dear unto One far distant, and hated by the many who are near*?" [3] The italics in every case are her own.

It is easy enough to condemn such words as expressing fundamental disbelief and distrust of our Father in Heaven

[1] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 147.
[2] Desolate, but not Forsaken.
[3] *Christus et Ecclesia.*

when He says, " I am thy portion and thine inheritance," but there are among us some who love God's creation so well that they can hardly help demurring to His method of Redemption, and of such Dora Greenwell is the spokesman. To those who are poor in the regions of emotion, and also are blest with a strong and reasonable will, all this may seem foolish and wrong ; but to those who have " great possessions " in their capacity for appreciating the beauty of our world-wide heritage, and are dowered with that most inconvenient gift, philosophic hesitation, and are moreover in practical life very easily led—to such as these her words are " heart-easing things," and explain many a temptation and many a hidden regret. The field of noble clean grain is not only desirable but indispensable, for without it we starve, but some lingering thoughts go back to the wild flowers that the plough has torn up and cast aside in the making of it. It is no right estimate to call these flowers worthless ; some few bear poison, and nearly all are useless to man, but they carry with them an appeal to beauty, and that has a value of its own. In the soul of our prophet, the Greek had at times a momentary triumph over the Saint, but it was only a flash. After such biting words as I have quoted from her strange poems, there is not one tale but ends in a few words of reconciliation and heartfelt union, and even that quotation about the disciple of Christ finding out the rigidity and terror of the Cross closes with these words, " Yet there transfixed he is there transfigured, and finds on Calvary his true Tabor." [1]

It is also very interesting to observe that never for even a moment does the careless Greek triumph over the Ethical philosopher, and the enticing call to explore the vague regions where right and wrong are blurred and mixed together by excitement, was to her ears like the sound of the bugle commanding an instantaneous retreat. As soon as the Greek becomes too obvious, and begins to impugn the supreme right of the moral law, we see her

[1] *Colloquia Crucis*, p. 148.

rise up, sword in hand. Goethe had died in 1832, and as yet scarcely sufficient time had elapsed to prove how profoundly antagonistic was his spirit to that of Christ. The light of genius shone from his works and blinded nearly every eye to the fact that his philosophic Pantheism had destroyed his moral sense. He never humbled himself, never judged himself, and set no law to his desires. In his letters and in his prose works this is far more clearly seen than in his poetry. "Are not God and Satan, heaven and hell, united in my own disposition?" he asks; "well, then, I wish to be both good and bad, like the rest of Nature." We have had plenty of time to judge of the seed by the crop that has ensued, but it was not so at the date of which I write. New ideas permeate slowly, and are the property of the few for the thirty or forty years we allow for a generation, and then they catch the popular mind and are soon broadcast, and finally one meets the thought at every turn, translated into word and action. Thus Goethe is the forerunner of Nietzsche. Now in 1866 it required considerable discernment to see that which, at the present time, is writ large over almost all the educated portions of our world, but our prophet stood on the hill-top and discerned it from afar. We know that she kept watch and ward over the reading of the much-loved lad, Archie Constable, and there has come to hand a very interesting letter addressed by her to his father at this date, expressive of her anxiety as to the result on the character of any such mental food.

"I am sorry that Archie is reading *Wilhelm Meister*, and the more so as he and I talked a good deal about Carlyle, which might have led to his taking it up. I do not know whether you and Lucy have read it? I have not, except in Reviews (one from de Quincey very condemnatory) and bits here and there, but see enough of it from these to know that it is the embodiment of all that which seems to me so very, very bad in Goethe, that *moral indifferentism*, things being right because they *are*,

which is a far deeper, deadlier wound to morals and religion than the mere making of vice attractive, as George Sand and Lord Byron do. That is only a sort of halo that may soon vanish, but this goes to the heart of all things. I think a great deal about this, because I can see from what I read and know, that it is here, in Pantheism, that the *push* of the battle now is. It is doubt of the Moral Government of the world. This is even the creed of some, ' There's nothing new, and there's nothing true, and it's no matter.' Of this creed Goethe was surely the High Priest and Apostle. The sight of Christ upon the Cross is a perfect answer to all this, but yet these ideas work in the Church of Christ itself."

These prophetic hints run all through her works, but I think the " locus classicus " is to be found in the grave discourse of the *Two Friends* in a passage of such beauty it is hard to keep from transcribing it in full. The speaker is the recluse, the thinker, and " Philip " represents the active practical mind, and he is now described as ordained and hard at work. As was said before, the friends are in reality the two sides of her own thought, now opposed and now in agreement. They are now discussing Poetry and Art, and the wonders of the world of imagination, and I will give the passage a little shortened.

" I know not," I said, " how to express clearly what I mean, but I do feel, sometimes painfully, a contradiction between the brokenness of Christ and the clear perfection of Art. In Art there is choice, self-pleasing, a drawing out of that which is obviously best ; in Christ, things which are not fair are yet pronounced good, prizeable. Sometimes after reading such a book, we will say as Shakespeare, I am conscious of a strange inner dissatisfaction, which I can only describe as a sense of impaired communion ; and something has said within me, All this is not of the Father but is of the world. I do not feel this in reading any book of sustained philosophic interest, but I do feel it in that mixed region of wit and fancy and feeling, which belongs to our mortal state as

such, and which seems in no way to bear upon our inner or future life. And what is this region but a world without souls, a world of sad and ruined beauty when looked at with reference to man's true destinies, and yet a rich and glorious world? I see in Art and Literature, in the subjects with which they deal, in the absorbing, intoxicating devotion they demand, something which reminds me of the Greek worship of Dionysus, 'the god of flourishing, decaying, changeable life,' the kindler of a lofty enthusiasm, *the intensifier of life*, the exalter of its pleasures, the deepener of its pangs, the bestower of an impassioned sympathy with nature. And beside this regal Being, robed in the purple he was born to, with garments not too careful of a stain, I see another Form, severe, restricted, also life's deepener, its intensifier, but after how different a spirit! The first is of the earth earthy; the second is the Lord from heaven.

> "The rose, ho! the rose, is the grace of the earth,
> Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it!"

The rose, drunk with its own fragrance and beauty; the smell of the fresh earth hangs about it, it is wet with the dews of heaven. "Enjoy me," it says, "for I am the rose, I am fair, I live but a day." It needs the broad sunlight, the free sweeping winds, it can bloom even on the battlefield, and grow redder with the blood of heroes. But Christ's flower grows underneath the snow, in a broken flower-pot, in a darkened cellar, anywhere; its petals are pale and it seldom opens fully, but when it expands so as to show its heart, what do we see there but the Cross and the emblems of the Passion?

Philip was silent a long while, and at last he said musingly, "I have felt the antagonism you speak of. I have found it out, as I have found out many antagonisms and affinities, by their helping or hindering me in my work. I shall never forget"—and then comes

one of those dreamy descriptions in which our author delights, the long silent golden afternoon, the low window-seat, and the young man reading Keats amid the scent of the clove carnations. This is broken by the uneasy consciousness that he ought to be setting out on his parish round, and as the shadows lengthen he braces himself and starts. There is an aged woman, very deaf, ignorant but anxious about her soul, and there is the loud and continuous noise of a loom working in the room beyond. "How hot and noisy the cottage seemed!" says Philip. "How contracted all around me! Had the world of light and beauty I lived and moved in but half an hour ago collapsed into this? How confused seemed my statements, my utterance thick and hesitating, as of one under a heavy thrall, for my heart was with Endymion and I had to tell the story of Christ." [1] He goes on to tell of other revulsions of feeling no less keen, but to me there is no need for another rewording of the difficulty, for the whole sad tale is told in that single sentence, "My heart was with Endymion while my lips had to tell the story of Christ."

Accepting the fact of this persistent and ever-recurrent antagonism to our eternal interests, what then shall we do? Man must have religion; he cannot leave the subject alone. "In the history of man there is nothing so wonderful as his faithfulness to the idea of God;" yet he is pursued by a sense of ill-desert, and is "not happy in that which he yet so ardently craves for; he can, as it were, do neither with nor without his God." [2] Man must have religion, but why not select certain elements and reject others, and make a congenial and easy one? Jeroboam did, and his new feasts, and his calves at Dan and Bethel were very popular. It is easier still to transform Christianity into such a religion because of its strongly consolatory side, and we may talk of the love of God and the dignity of man, of the innocence

[1] *Two Friends*, pp. 48-53.
[2] *Liber Humanitatis*, p. 50.

of children and the beauty of angels, and make up a very attractive system.

And did our prophet follow along this line? Never, never. Herein lies her strength. Realising the antagonism to the full, she yet saw with unswerving vision that to omit the Cross is to make our faith not Christianity at all; we must take revelation, or leave it. *Colloquia Crucis* is on this subject, and the discussion starts thus: "Natural religion, I said musingly, seems kinder than Christianity does, in ignoring all intervening agencies of a painful kind, and taking us back direct to God, our loving and indulgent Father." [1] Philip, as ever, takes the practical side. Does it work? Is it really kind and healing to the single sufferer "through the mischance of having broken some individual leg on one occasion and some accidental heart on another?" . . . "Its march is that of the caravan through the desert, which does not stop when some sick out-worn traveller drops from the advancing rank and file to perish by the wayside alone. It is Christ who delays His journey for the *one* wounded traveller, who pours wine and oil into his hurts, who *sets him on His own steed*, and who provides for His final entire restoration." [2] Here is a good beginning, and the pages go on to show the fostering care of Christ over all the loveliest possessions of the human heart, and how He robs it of nothing but what is worthless; how, even though He does not by name enumerate our riches, His executive, the Holy Spirit, keeps careful guard over them. I fain would quote, but, alas, this is one of the long, trailing, wandering conversations that evolves its aim obscurely and gradually, and never reaches a definite end, and quotation in any clear sequence becomes impossible. There are sarcastic hints of the intolerable failure both Goethe and Rousseau made of their lives, and there are a dozen other things, but if we want any conclusion we must look elsewhere.

[1] See p. 39 and onward.
[2] *Colloquia Crucis.*

Once she wrote an essay that to me seems of extraordinary value, because it is on a subject on which we all conspire to be silent, and it bears the cumbrous explanatory title—"An Enquiry into how far the Spirit of Poetry is alien, and how far friendly, to that of Christianity." [1] It comes straight to the point, that for more than half the journey the two spirits are firm friends and mutual helpers. "Poetry, like Christianity, gives wings to the fettered soul, sweeps from off it those cold, cleaving, obstructive webs which sense and mammon are for ever spinning as a winding-sheet against the day of the soul's burial, that saddest of all funerals." . . . "It takes him out of the ironbound present; it has many whispers, many anticipations." We have page after page of fine discriminating praise of the unworldliness, the noble exaltation of the two friends as they walk hand in hand; but the cross-road is reached at last and they must part. The Poet goes his way, desiring "wine wrung to him from a full cup, golden, gleaming, crowned with roses. Even his agonies are on a grand scale. He is at home with Prometheus on the rock" . . . "even with Satan in the burning marl. He is impatient of the everyday and the commonplace, and here the Christian is at home."

Here follows a beautiful description of "Christ's sober-suited regiment," and how each member "is conversant with life's homely trials, its obscure unseen griefs"; how he holds out to every man "a hand wherein are some leaves of the Tree of Life," and how "his path is straight as a dart can make it." The essay closes with these most characteristic words: "The Christian will be content to quench his thirst at the brook in the way, and therefrom to lift up his head; and though he may sometimes taste of song's sweet intoxicating wild honey, it will be as did the mighty men in the scriptural story, but sparingly, and on the tip of the spear."

The conclusion she reaches on the whole subject (and

[1] *Liber Humanitatis*, p. 118.

we have to confess that in definite words she never reaches one at all), is that the infinitely attractive Greek proves himself eminently unsatisfactory, our conditions of life being what they are. He helps those who are able to help themselves, urging on all that is powerful and beautiful in us, and bidding us explore our surroundings with a free hand, but as soon as you touch the confines of any kind of evil or pain, he turns away and is silent. Sin, sorrow, disease, bereavement, old age, death, eternity—what can he say to these? Shove them out of sight, cover them up, hide the horrible skull and cross-bones, shut the miserable beggar out into the storm, and enjoy youth and beauty and high spirits in the halls of light and music and perfume. Is this a creed that deals satisfactorily with human life? It barely deals with a seventh part of it. Christianity offers itself for *the whole of life*, and this is always composed of the homely details of recurrent duty, even when it is not assaulted by sickness, poverty, oppression, and limitation, as is, alas, even still the portion of the immense majority among us. Christ goes down to the very foundations; He grasps life at its root as no other does, and controls it even to the outermost leaves and blossoms.

Here our author stops short. Does He do so? Is He considerate to adventure and excitement, and the ebullitions of the fulness of vitality? Is He quite kind enough to that beautiful seventh part, that will always stand in the foreground and invite all eyes? She tries various answers. After all He does not condemn, He is only silent, and silence gives consent; the very God who redeemed us also created us, and He takes this background of creation for granted, and so does not mention it; Christ is the light of the World, not only of the Church, and the whole field is His, hedgerow flowers as well as grain; the Cross is as purely remedial as was the work of the Good Samaritan, and all must give way before the sight of wounds and possible death; life is short and severely educative, eternity is long and

reproductive, and the Messiah, the Redeemer not only of the soul but of the body, of Nature, of all our conditions, is yet to come; when "the kingdoms of this world have become the Kingdom of our God and of His Christ," we shall find every gap filled, every least aspiration completed, and truly it is only for a little while that we must be the servants of the poor and needy.

Thus she glances round the whole circle of her knowledge to discover a solution, and her tentative answers find a noble substantiation in her own devoted work in the Workhouse, the Penitentiary, and the Jail. Keenly she felt the solidarity of the whole human race, and to be loved, heartily and faithfully loved, through the forbidding cloud of her sins, to be felt for through our most squalid pains, to be suffered for, died for—oh, do not complain (she cries) of a little silence, a little omission, are not these facts enough to bring the heart of man to the foot of the Cross in adoring gratitude? Words are never enough for love. It listens to them for they are sweet, but after awhile it grows impatient and asks for action. It demands high effort, labour, and suffering to prove its reality. Between man and woman, the instinct on the one side is to give and on the other to demand such sacrifices, and, fantastic as are the tales of self-imposed tasks set by knights and ladies of old, the instinct that underlies them is genuine, and will last as long as man is on the earth. Such a declaration of love, given in awe-struck silence, is the tale of the Passion, a solemn appeal to the heart rather than to the brain. "Turn aside and see this great sight." "Look and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," and the demand in return is for the consecration of the whole being.

"In Jesus Christ all contradictions are reconciled; yet in Him also, and in all that is connected with His person and office, we are met by a strange contradiction, a clashing of opposing attributes." This is the opening sentence of her first prose work, *The Patience of Hope*, and a little way on we read again of "that deep original

wound of our nature which has set the ideals of Christ and Humanity so far apart, that the wealth of the one can only be attained through the minishing of the other." Thus does she plunge *in medias res*, and to the end of her life she brings forward the same thought in ever-varying words and symbols. It is a wonder she was listened to at all, for at the time when she wrote the main body of the Church of Christ turned a blind face toward the solution of the stupendous perplexities that surround the life of man on earth. There were gifted outsiders too, but most of them would not even turn their eyes toward the strait gate and the narrow way. In short, those who had faith and did good, did not demand a theory, and those whose efforts were spent on finding a theory had discarded faith. The believers rightly appreciated salvation as strongly individual in character, and patiently they toiled, adding thousands one by one to the great multitude that no man can number, and never paused to face the collective problem ; while those disturbed in mind pointed to the appalling triumphs of evil ever around us, and the insecurity of testimony as to divine intervention, and concluded that our Creator (if such a being existed) looked on in silence, and was evidently indifferent to moral issues.

Our writer stood between these two camps looking wistfully from the one to the other, but much water has flowed under the bridge in the half-century since she left us, and had she been alive to-day she would hardly have known how to greet fast enough her fellow-explorers in this wide and perilous country.

We still have the Greek among us, and his advice runs thus—Gather up your heritage, and choose its best parts ; pick out beauty and knowledge, adventure, high spirits, and joy ; never look aside to poverty, sickness, depression, and death. These are but accidents, and true life is in the joyous atmosphere where "youth salutes youth." Take one world at a time, and raise it to its highest power, for that is the truest wisdom.

We have also, thank God, the Saints among us still, and they are not all of them old and grey-headed either. These drink sparingly of the alluring waters of pleasure, and find the good in them far outweighed by even a little taste of the happiness that comes to the humble spirit that has obeyed first the "Come," and then the "Follow" of the supreme Master of human life. And thirdly, we have those who work hard at Social Reform, and this section is new since those days, and is firm and strong and good. If even the groan of altruistic sorrow is a comfort, much more so is sympathy enlisted in a thousand practical directions. We know by the fashion in which we are created that we are first body and then soul, and the reform of circumstances that affect the physical well-being are the necessary preliminary to the spiritual good. They go but a small part of the way, and fail if nothing further is offered. As said Miss Octavia Hill at the close of her long and honoured life of unremitting effort for the very lowest—"One lesson I have learned. It is not the stye that makes the pig, but the pig that makes the stye." Such are the three types of mind of the present day, and Dora Greenwell shows by her life and writings how keen and alert is the sympathy she feels for them all in turn, though her abiding allegiance is with the Saint.

There is an author, by name Prince Troubetzleoy, who has much the same aim as that toward which she was so persistently groping, and he clothes his conclusion in strong and incisive words.[1] After dwelling on the loneliness and ill-treatment of Christ, and the extreme self-denial demanded from those who would follow Him, he adds:

"So long as the highest summit of Evolution is hidden from our gaze, the entire process seems pure vanity, but where it is revealed our nightmare vanishes. The glory of the Resurrection seen as in a lightning-flash floods the mind, and the vision becomes a fountain of infinite joy."

[1] *The Hibbert Journal*, April 1918.

Again, " Life is worth the pain of being lived. It holds within itself infinite values for which suffering and sacrifice are not too high a price to pay." . . . " All life becomes luminous, like the garments of the Saviour on Mount Tabor. There the joy which the sun pours over field and forest receives its true meaning." Here follows a fine description of the beauty of Nature, which he stretches to include " the shining glories of poetry and imagination," and then he closes with praise of the Cross of Christ, as the only way to reach the longed-for ideal. " As a fore-taste of the Transfiguration and Resurrection of the entire Universe, the beauty and light of earth have their justification." . . . " The gulf between earth and heaven is done away ; earth rises to heaven step by step, and in the effort the creature has a fore-taste of the celestial."

These are fine words, and they make a rush toward the conclusion at which our writer was always aiming, and yet she would say they relied too much on our unknown future. She was always afraid of setting too much hope on the world to come. She said that death must never be looked on as a greater Saviour from either sin or suffering than is Christ the Lord ; that change of circumstances is a small thing compared with change of heart ; that " eternal life " is a continuity from beginning to end, and that however broken and dim may be our spiritual experience, it affords the only true sample of what " heaven " may mean. Back we turn after all, and find more comfort in her faltering, pausing steps than in the leap forward we have looked at. These steps of hers have been tested and tried in every conceivable way, these estimate the extent of the sacrifice offered both by Christ and by His Church, these do not turn aside by a single yard from the recognition of Gethsemane, Calvary, and the Tomb in Joseph's garden, before the glories of Easter are possible.

Although the Gospel is always preached to the poor, although the mysteries of the Spirit are revealed unto

babes, *i.e.* to the untutored, although the first apostles were young fishermen of the Lake, that our God does not undervalue the best of human learning is evident from His choice of Moses and Isaiah in the Old Testament, and St Paul in the New. The main mass of men are the busy and the weary, the cramped and baffled and disappointed, those who have been robbed of their full birthright by adverse circumstances, and here the message of Christ is the one great consolation and encouragement. It slurs over nothing, it evades nothing, but meets their care full and fair. But this is not the fate of the whole race.

We have among us a minority who are young and strong and free to choose, and who walk singing and shouting along the high road of life, arm in arm with Cultivation, ready to admire and reject as she may point out. A minority, but a very influential one, for here are the speakers, writers, explorers, and active leaders of the age immediately before us, and from which the century takes its colour. The band goes forward full of hope and energy, till it reaches the point where the roads diverge. There the Young Ruler stands still. " Here is something beautiful, pure, world-wide, inspiring ; before this I kneel." Then comes surprise, " But I fear the demand made is incompatible with much that I love." And then we have the refusal, " The price is too high. I cannot give it," and scores of our Young Rulers rise from their knees and turn away sorrowful. Now is it not a noble vocation to stand just there at the dreaded cross-roads, and speak to these more gifted minds one by one ? speak to them persuasively in their own language ?

It was one of the great gifts of Pentecost that every man should hear the Gospel of Christ in his native tongue, so that the necessary effort of reception and obedience should not be increased by the adventitious difficulty of the medium. We all allow that Cultivation, more especially in the directions of philosophic thought, has a dialect of its own, and here, at the very point and

crisis of defection, stands she of whom we write. Her words may well be unintelligible to the crowd of the passers-by, but they are the very mother-tongue of the finely-dowered and hesitating few. The extatic lover of the young and brave who claim the right of experience and perilous adventure, the sympathiser-in-chief with those ardent souls who feel the whole world of beauty and skill to be their lawful heritage, a world without which life becomes meaningless if not brutal, a heritage of which none shall defraud them; among such as these she stands at the cross-roads, holding out both hands in eager welcome. Yet the message she gives is faithful to the Gospel of Christ. It is to bear witness that we must have a Guide to tell us which road to take, and that looking round on the wide world of men, we may trust wholly and unreservedly to the Divine Person who once walked this earth of ours. He knows more than we do about the whole of our existence, about life and death, and principalities and powers, and things present and things to come, and we may lay our hands in His and follow Him.

An insoluble enigma lies before us in the evil and ruin of the world, and there is no other way to meet it but to share in it and to face the second enigma of the Cross and the Grave. We must walk by faith and not by sight for a little while before reaching the burst of triumph that awaits us. And yet it is not quite all faith, for she shows us by glimpses almost too subtle to put into words that education is better than ignorance, that cultivation is better than insensitiveness to beauty, that daring and courage are better than inaction, that the supreme sympathy of Christ is not with angels, but with man, who has powers and aspirations developing in a thousand different directions, and that of all his treasures, when the great Day of sifting comes, "there shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." We read, "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son . . . because He is the Son of Man;" because He can sympathise not

only with poverty and ignorance, but with infinite delight in truth and beauty and love. Not one bit of our nature is wasted in His hands ; it may be cast into the furnace and transformed, but it is not wasted, not thrown away. He alone is the safe guardian of our utmost treasures, and even here on earth we can honestly "say with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honour and glory and blessing."

Dora Greenwell evades nothing of the perplexity and sorrow, but there she stands with wide and penetrating knowledge in her mind, keen sympathy in her tastes, the faith that comes by personal experience in her soul, and a glow of welcome and comfort and love in her heart ; and by these things we know that she is of the order of the prophets.

"And art Thou come with us to dwell,
Our Prince, our Guide, our Love, our Lord ?
And is Thy name Emmanuel,
God present with His world restored ?

The heart is glad for Thee ! it knows
None now shall bid it err or mourn,
And o'er its desert breaks the rose
In triumph o'er the grieving thorn.

Each heart's deep instinct unconfessed,
Each lowly wish, each daring claim ;
All, all that life hath long repressed,
Unfolds, undreading blight or blame.

The world is glad for Thee !—the heart
Is glad for Thee !—and all is well,
And fixed, and sure, because *Thou art*,
Whose name is called Emmanuel ! "

*This is the last poem in "Carmina Crucis."*

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